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TALES OF THE MOUNTAINS;

OR SOJOURNS IN

EASTERN BELGIUM.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

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THE MOUNTAIN HOME.

CHAPTER I.

IN the romantically situated little village of H——, about a mile and a half from that favourite summer resort of the Liegois-Chaudfontaine, than the scenery about which you will find in the pleasant province of Liège few parts more charming or picturesque, there lived, in the year of grace 18— an English family of rank; who having, from motives of economy, sought in the Netherlands a temporary home, seemed to have realized all that the heart could desire, in exile, in one of the prettiest rustic chateaus by the mountain side eye ever beheld.

As you viewed it from the road, you would have hardly supposed it capable of accommodating more than an elderly lady, perhaps, and her two or three spinster daughters; or some cozy methodical old bachelor with his brace of pet nieces, prim housekeeper and pack of beagles; much less that so distinguished a person in every one's estimation but his own, as Mr. St. Clair, his amiable lady, his sister—the fascinating and accomplished Countess de Montville—seven blooming offspring, and servants, who, (it is due to them to record it) had with unshaken fidelity followed their master's fortunes for nearly a quarter of a century, could be stowed away, and room to spare, within its unpretending walls. Nevertheless, so it was. Under that modest roof, ate, drank, and seemingly thrived, fourteen living souls, who, in spite of all drawbacks, and what state of life is exempt? might, as Mrs. St. Clair—worthy woman! used often to say, "have gone further and fared worse."

Why so sensible and far casting a man as

Mr. St. Clair, should ever, with six boys and a girl to bring up and provide for, have turned his back on his own country, and preferred exile amidst the wild woods and mountains of H——, to the peaceful, propitious scenes of his own happy land, was always a marvel to his friends. Perhaps after all, it was, as he said, "Hobson's choice" with him; probably, he cared in his heart as little for foreign fashions and frivolities as you or I do; but, may be, finding it expedient to pull in and put by for a time—to break up an expensive establishment; and falling into the prevailing fond belief that the work of retrenchment can be better carried out anywhere than under the noses of sneering friends and acquaintances; and, moreover, seeing it certified by the guide books, in addition to the irresistible representations of his charming sister the Countess de Montville, that six hundred a year would go abroad as far as a thousand a year at home, and that if there was one part of the habitable globe more than another where

you could live, and like a prince too, for next to nothing, it was the fruitful Province of Liege, thitherward he determined to bend his steps, and to pitch his tent in a land of so much promise.

Alas! how often have I heard him declare since, that if there is one delusion of the would be economist more lamentable than another, it is the fallacious expectation of money gathering at rail road pace abroad. "From the moment an Englishman, Alan," I have heard him say fifty times, "puts his foot on foreign shores in search of a happier home than he has left behind him, nothing but disappointments, vexations and regrets meet him at every turn; and if, by unusual good luck, or the exercise of extraordinary patience and submission, he steer clear of these—there is always something due to national pride, and national character. However he may yield and stifle reflection, if he has a true Briton's heart in his breast, his course, as an alien, must be one continued series of self-sacrifice and humiliations from first to last."

And this brings to my recollection a humorous anecdote he sometimes used to tell of himself when the tenant of chambers on the sky floor of No. —, Pump Court, Inner Temple, and which, being a pretty conclusive case in point, I cannot do better than give here in his own words as near as I can remember them.

Gad, Sir! was his reply, when once I was congratulating him on the excellence of his *St. Emilion Vieux*, at a cost would be cheap for a bottle of Vauxhall sherry, and the wonderful proficiency of his children in the French tongue,—Gad, Sir, it's all very pretty talking, but when I look back and think what a fool I have been—when I weigh fairly all I have won against all that I have lost—when I cast around me and see just what I am—what those I most love and cherish are, and what we all might have been, but for the falsest step I ever took in my life, I can hardly look myself in the face in the glass without blushing. Nay—nay—there is never any necessity for it; so there

can be no excuse. And with such a long head, too, as every body gave Aubrey St. Clair credit for—a first-class man, forsooth! such talents—such interests—such opportunities! and to kick them all down for the sake of cheap claret, and that Master Fred and Miss Alice might *parler française* before they could well talk their mother tongue. Zounds! Alan, I ought to have been horse-whipped. But what's the use of talents or bright prospects without common sense? Just as well send a vessel, no matter what its qualities may be, to sea without ballast. Why, Sir, there was old Lord Eldon who was a college chum of my father's, and old S——— the Attorney, two as thorough machiners as ever went in harness, used to declare it would be my own fault if I were not, some day, Solicitor General or Chief Baron of the Exchequer, at least. What do you think of that—isn't it enough to drive a man, with six boys to do for, out of his wits? There's not a shadow of doubt they were right, and hadn't it been for that confounded

grand tour they sent me on to finish my education, it isn't at all improbable I might in due time have been Lord Chancellor. That tour spoilt it all—I never was the same man again after that grand tour. It gave me a relish for things all very well on this side the channel, but death and destruction even to dream of in Pump Court. And, as the devil would have it, what must my beautiful sister Nel do but throw herself away, during a visit in Paris, on that beggarly French Count De Montville, with nothing in the world hardly to bless himself but a handsome face and figure. What Nel could have been thinking of, with a good six hundred a year of her own, and charms, that I must say, of mind and person not seen every day, to sacrifice herself to that ragamuffin De Montville, was always a riddle to me.

Well, I was just beginning to think myself that Eldon was right, and that it *would* be no one's fault but my own, if Foggs and Bumpton got a silk gown first, when Nel became Countess de Montville. From that day it

was all over with me; and though the old Chancellor persisted in predicting miracles, and papers continued to roll in steadily from the old city firm, so also rolled in letter after letter from Paris, enough to turn the head of greater philosophers than Aubrey St. Clair. Nel knew my *penchant* for a roving life, and had often laughed at the dummies on my table, and the miscellaneous composition of my library. You know, Alan, I was always a stickler for neatness and order—nobody was keener at detecting a weak point than Nel. Certainly my carpet and curtains *were* worth ten of Foggs' or Bumpton's; my chair a curiosity — I loved comfort, and hated humbug; Instead of letting the dust and cobwebs repose around me unmolested; instead of strewing the floor all over with books and papers, and red tape and dirty parchments like Foggs and Bumpton; I must needs be shewing my taste on the sky floor of No. — Pump Court. Nel knew it all, laughed at my clerk, poh, pohed the Chancellor himself, and putting on my wig and

gown, would, in the teeth of all sense of decorum, set us both roaring so loud, that one day, Mr. Cornelius Pym—a rising young pleader just underneath, sent up a grave remonstrance, and an intimation that "if such irregularities were repeated, he must be under the unpleasant necessity of laying a formal complaint before the society." Poor Nel! I shall never forget her look of mingled alarm and ineffable contempt when Mumps (Pym's clerk) delivered himself of this warlike message. I thought poor Mumps would have shrunk beneath the fire that flashed from her eyes; it was a moment of fearful suspense—some dreadful explosion was evidently coming; I suppose I looked at her imploringly—the storm in a moment was averted, and such another irrepressible burst of laughter accompanied Mumps' retiring form, that must have convinced Mr. Cornelius Pym of one thing at all events—that however scandalous and incorrigible such conduct might be, we did not bear malice.

"It won't do, Aubrey," said she, as soon

as, after repeated efforts on my part to moderate her mirth, she could talk reasonably—"it won't do—there's no help for it—you must let the sky floor—get old W—— to buy the curtains and carpet-chairs, table and dummies—put up a bill in Park street—pack up without another day's loss—follow me to Paris, and leave Foggs, Bumpton and Pym a clear coast."

A few days after this, Nel set off on her long promised visit to the gay Capital, leaving me once more to the dummies and my own reflections; sadly perplexed with her pernicious counsels, and irresolute whether to abdicate once and for ever in favor of Foggs and Co. or to realize the worthy old Chancellor's prognostications — take a first set in King's Bench walk, and wait with dignified composure for the good things that *must* fall into my mouth, if I would but hold it open wide enough for them.

Six months wore away; Nel had become Countess de Montville, and taken up her abode in Paris; while I, still the near neigh-

bour of Mr. Cornelius Pym, having as yet resisted all her inducements to cut his connexion, was *in statu quo*, proceeding at a slow, but no doubt sure pace towards the woolsack; when one day I was sitting with my legs on the fender half asleep and half awake; a volume of Coke upon Lyttelton lying open on the table, papers and parchment and red tapes strewed about *à la* Foggs and Bumpton, and the second volume of Dumas' Monte Christo in my hand, when who should make her appearance, in travelling trim and with a face full of woe and anxiety, but sister Nel. I saw in an instant that something had happened. It was all out almost before I could express my surprise—that ragamuffin de Montville had eloped with the wife of his bosom friend, to Italy, and there was Nel come to pour out all her wrongs and griefs to me, *minus*, thank Heaven, only half her fortune.

To tell the truth, I wasn't half as sorry as I pretended to be out of sympathy, the match was never to my liking, nor did Nel, I was

pleased to find, after the first ebullitions, take it as much to heart as I expected. The fact is, she had never loved de Montville, her passion for him had been that of an ardent enthusiastic nature which had no foundation either in true worth or mutual esteem, and was therefore not likely to long outlive the novelty of possession. All de Montville cared for Nel, beyond the admiration every man of fashion must acknowledge for a beautiful and accomplished woman, and the eclat of conquest, was for her fortune; this obtained, he cared little who possessed or what became of her. But, still, he was her husband, and something must be done. So, the first thing that naturally suggested itself was that, as poor Nel had been travelling all night and had hardly tasted food for twenty-four hours, something to eat and drink ought to precede every other consideration—so, off started Sam (my clerk) to the next Tavern for the most *recherché* little *dejeuner à la fourchette* that could be knocked up at a minute's notice, with strict injunctions on no account

to let Pym or his clerk become cognizant of the matter. What could I do? I knew the risk I ran, no one knew better that if there was one thing more suicidal, perhaps, than another, it was to be detected in any act of self indulgence, much less carving and carousing at such an hour; but Nel was famishing; to have packed her off to Park Street in such a deplorable state would have been an act of barbarity old S .... himself would not have been guilty of. Well, back came Sam, presently radiant with smiles, having, I must say, executed his delicate commission in a manner highly creditable to him, and which would hardly have been predicated of him from a mere cursory glance at his exterior. Sam was no fool, although totally deficient in those generally prized attributes that mark what is termed a sharp boy. What I called simplicity, others deemed stupidity in him; my neighbours wondered I could tolerate such a lout, whereas, I thought I saw fresh instances of penetration and good sense in him every day. True, he was an oddity to behold;

appearances were certainly not in Sam's favor. The fact is I never could endure a *spirituel* clerk. He was as perfect a contrast to Pym's Mumps as could be conceived. Perhaps Mumps' appearance *was* more professional taking it altogether than Sam's, with his demure tallowy face, long straight black hair, small brown twinkling eyes, pointed nose and chin, and lanky stooping figure; whereas, Sam with his round curly head, chubby cheeks like two ripe codlins, plump pudgy figure, large goggle eyes, enormous ears, turn up nose and laughing mouth, might, with all my drilling, have just as well been taken for a plough or pot boy as a lawyer's clerk; still, there was a frank, fresh, honest, good intention in all he said and did, to my mind worth a thousand of the sly, sleeky looks and cringing manners of that Mumps.

Be this as it may, Sam's elegant little collation, consisting of a *fricassée* of chicken and *sauce piquant;* scotch collops, apple fritters and a bottle of *Chateau Margeaux,* Carbonel's warranted, was unexceptionable,

and which no *spirituel* Mumps ever achieved for his master at a pinch; so, having received a well merited compliment from Nel, and something of a more tangible form, which, as it found its way with the quickness of lightning into his pocket, I never knew the precise nature or extent of, but that don't matter, down we sat, as fearlessly as if we were doing the most meritorious thing in the world, and as if there was no such a person as Cornelius Pym within fifty miles.

Gad, sir, we had hardly taken the first mouthful, when rap-tap-tap went the knocker, and down went my knife and fork as if I had been electrified—"stop Sam, stop!"—it was too late; there was Pym himself on the mat, just stepped up to borrow the third volume of Petersdorf, and to speak "half a word" to me. We had made it all up about the "scandalous irregularities" long ago, and were, as such near neighbours ought to be, on the most friendly and obliging terms; still Cornelius Pym hated me in his heart, certainly, it *was* provoking after counting the footsteps

of the clients time after time up to floor No. 3, to hear them pass such a steady fellow's door as Mr. Cornelius Pym's to that scapegrace Aubrey St. Clair's.

"Just half a word, Sam," entreated Pym.

"Very sorry, Sir, but Master's particularly engaged just now, Sir," interposed Sam, keeping the door half open with one hand, and holding a wet pen extended between the thumb and finger of the other, by the way—this, or sticking it behind his ear whenever he answered the outer door, was an invariable rule with Sam, as with other well appointed clerks.

"I shouldn't detain him for more than a minute," urged Pym.

"Very sorry indeed, Sir," persisted Sam, "particularly engaged, Sir, a Lady with him Sir—his sister Sir, the Countess de Montville, Sir."

"Oh, ah, eh? a lady, I see, company, dinner, eh, eh?" muttered Cornelius, sniffing, as if he knew the savour of fricasseed chicken by heart, "I see," and retracing his steps,

Sam having promised to bring the Petersdorf down in ten minutes, we heard his door slammed after him greatly to my relief and Nel's amusement. The sinner! he had no more need of the Petersdorf at that moment than I had; but having espied Sam and the waiter, from the little side window, coming up stairs, although they did take off their shoes, the young fox thought he'd make a discovery. Well, Sir, it was doomed to be a day of misfortunes; Nel's visits at chambers had never boded me good. Scarcely had we somewhat recovered our serenity, and commenced operations on the Scotch collops, when rap-rap-rap-rap! went the knocker again. Merciful Heaven! it was no Cornelius Pym this time, I knew the knock in an instant,—no man's knock was like old S.... 's—it drove all the blood to my heart, as was evident by Nel's amazed look as she sat staring at me as if she thought I was paralized. And fairly paralized I was: faith, Alan! what I suffered at that moment, a thousand years, if I lived as long, would never efface from my memory.

Instead of calling to Sam to say I was out, or ill, or dead, or anything rather than be found in the midst of Scotch collops and apple fritters at half-past two, there I stood like a statue, as if spell-bound. To have whipped up dishes, plates, table-cloth and all, and poked them out of sight in a moment would have been the alternative of most sensible persons, and done almost as soon as thought of; but there, I say, I stood like a guilty wretch caught in the fact, and what was most torturing, Nel looking all the time as innocent and unconcerned as if there was nothing the matter.

"Sam, Sam!" gasped I, at length—it was too late; open flew the door, and O, ye gods! in walked my best, my chief, almost my only client, the main stay of my existence, the sure rock on which I anchored all my fondest hopes; by Jove! what a scene; stunned, speechless, I forgot even the usual courtesies.—There sat Nel, unintroduced, although my sister and a Countess, too, thinking, as well she might, that I was mad; and

there stood my honored client—my stay and prop, and sheet anchor, first casting looks of horror at the Scotch collops, then of suspicion and reproach at my beautiful companion:—it was a moment of terrible, and never to be forgotten anguish.

"I—I—I—" stammered I, at length with downcast eyes and faltering voice.

"No apologies required, Mr. St. Clair," interrupted the great attorney, "I am sorry, Sir, to have disturbed you at your dinner; thought you messed in hall:—good morning, Sir;—nay pardon, another time, Sir, perhaps another time;"—saying which with a slight bow, the light of my eyes, the arbiter of my fate made straightway for the door.

"Pray, Sir," entreated I, making a last and desperate effort, "I beseech you—my sister, the Countess de Montville—pray—"

"Not a word, Mr. St. Clair; am really very sorry,—another time, Sir, another time, perhaps,"—and turning away, and displaying to my agonized gaze the ends of a monster set of papers which peeped forth from his oat

tail pocket, he descended the staircase with heavy tread, without saying another word; while I stood rivetted and gazing over the banisters at his retreating figure, till he had made good his exit then and for ever, no doubt, from No.— Pump Court, Inner Temple.

Dizzy and dumb-founded I found my way at last back again to my seat, into which I threw myself, an object pitiable to behold. My tongue was glued to the roof of my mouth, my brain was on fire, the Scotch collops were abomination to behold;—Nel saw my sufferings.

"Well, Aubrey," said she, "I always understood that you lawyers were not proverbial for your gallantry to our sex, but of all the bears—"

"Hush, hush, for Heaven's sake!" cried I convulsively; "that man, Nel, bear as you call him, had the making of your brother Aubrey's fortune in his hands."

"More's the pity, if true," replied Nel, carelessly, and soaking some sponge cake in her claret.

There was a dead pause for several moments.

"That man, Nel, bear as he may be, had a set of papers for me in his pocket, worth five guineas, besides Sam's fee."

"Well, it's a blessing," smiled Nel, "we don't depend on them for our dinner to-day."

Poor Nel! say what I would, I couldn't make her understand it at all:—she couldn't see why the head partner of a head city firm need be a bear. One thing was certain—all further hopes of the Chancellorship were extinguished for ever.

"Never mind!" condoled Nel, "it isn't every junior, remember that, who has got £800 a year in the 3 per cents."

I reminded her that I had lately lost nearly five thousand pounds by that confounded South Eastern spec.

"The more necessity," insisted Nel, "to take care for the future, and lose no more."

Had she said, the more need to stick to the main chance and double my capital, she would indeed have been my guardian angel

and I should have been at this moment—there's not a doubt of it—Lord high Chancellor of England:—poor Nel has much to answer for.

"We must put our heads together, my dear Aubrey," said she, encouragingly, as we rode home, "and if you don't double your fortune in ten years—if you'll only be guided by me, and forget all those silly dreams of the woolsack—my name's not Eleanor de Montville."

We did put our heads together, God help us! that day, and many more after; the upshot of which was, as you know, that another rising young barrister took possession of the sky floor; the snug little house and furniture and effects in Park Street passed into fresh hands; and having completed all arrangements, and provided for every emergency, we bade a last and long adieu to our native shores; firm no doubt in the conviction that ere long we should return to them loaded with the golden fruits of such a meritorious sacrifice.—

Such were some of Aubrey St. Clair's unavailing regrets. "Why not return, then" said I to him one day, when he was deprecating the folly of a young man deserting the profession to which he had been brought up, because fortune had given him the wherewithal to be idle, "Wherefore not retrace your steps, it is not too late to astonish the world, still."

"My dear fellow," was his reply, "there is nothing more difficult than for a man who has deserted his post to replace himself in *statu quo*. He has lost his footing;—has to go over the ground again *de novo;* his friends may have lost sight of him, or their confidence have been irretrievably shaken. The new collar will gall, whereas, he pulled away manfully at the old, and was, at least, up to his work:—no, no, Alan! it won't do to desert the ranks; the deserter carries about with him the badge of his recusancy—he is a marked man—he can never fill the foremost places; he may occupy the gaps made by other deserters like himself, but who cares to

trust him? And even the *otium cum dignitate* in its best sense is better in theory than practice. It may be all very well when the business of this world has fairly passed out of our hands, and we are entitled by age and long servitude to fall back into our easy chairs, but youth is the season for exertion, and a young man, whatever may be his independent resources, has no right to live a life of inaction, which is not always a life free from sin, any more than of sorrow. If he be the father of a family, the obligation of course is a thousand fold heavier. The same fortune that might serve very well to supply a family's wants, as long as they are children, will be very inadequate to bring them up, and place them out in life in the stations they may be entitled by their birth to fill; then is the value of industry made manifest; then come unavailing regrets and futile schemes—the bitter consciousness of time mispent and opportunities for ever lost. Whatever you do, Alan, my fine fellow, stick to the main chance."

This to me.—A good joke indeed!

CHAPTER II.

BUT to resume the thread of our narrative. After having gone through, with the patience of martyrdom, all the numberless and indescribable vexations and annoyances inseparable from a state of migration, with a large family at one's back, in a foreign land; submitted with fortitude unexampled to all the trying exactions, disappointments and mortifications of foreign travel: after having wandered with a heavy heart through the dull deserted grass-grown thoroughfares of Bruges; paced square after square and street after street, without meeting twenty human faces; gazed with sad and unsympathizing eye on "the high Spanish gabled houses, the

dingy costumes of the inhabitants, the dismal looking convents, and the numerous monuments of antiquity," as Mr. Addison says, "that greet you at every turn, and give to this fine extensive city so gloomy an air:" after having sighed for comfort and companionship in the cold uncongenial atmosphere of Ghent, almost expired from *ennui* at Malines: bustled it amongst the unsociable, business driving crowds of Antwerp: flaunted it with the gayest in the spicy, pompous promenades of Brussels—that most showy, arrogant and mammon-worshipping of capitals; in fact, having tried in turn all the best reputed places of resort where the English in Belgium are wont to seek a home, poor Aubrey St. Clair, at last, seeing an advertisement of the Chateau and appendages at H——, pitched his tent in the pleasant province of Liége, and, certainly, as Mrs. St. Clair, as I have before observed, used often to declare, "might have gone further and fared much worse."

It was just the spot where the poet or the painter would have been in raptures from

sunrise to sunset; just the sweet retreat where the wearied spirit, disgusted with the world's vanity and vain glory, would have sought for peace. In the bosom of mountains, woods and water, a land on every side of unsurpassed richness and beauty, not bleak and sterile, but teeming with fruits and flowers, and fat pastures, it was, indeed, the realization of all that the heart most rejoices in, and wanted nothing but the tinkling of the Sabbath bell, as heard in every nook and dell of happy England, to be a paradise complete.

But its attractions were not confined to its mere local beauties, though these were enough to throw the most unpoetical into endless raptures. H—— had substantial claims on the most unimaginative—it had its mutton and milk, as well as its mountains; its good bread and beef as well as its beautiful and sublime.

There are, doubtless, many other of Belgium's provinces quite as charming as Liége; but the hungry traveller thinks himself for-

tunate if he can procure for love or money, in some of his wanderings, even a *tartine* of rye bread and a cup of goat's milk. About H—— he may descend from the mountain keen as a hunter, and it will be his own fault or misfortune if he cannot find fare at his command, within half-an-hour's walk, fit for an emperor.

As for the Chateau, it would have puzzled a conjuror to say of what order of architecture it most partook, of ionic, gothic, or doric; it was neither one nor the other, but an indescribable mixture of all, the doric perhaps predominating; but what it wanted in regularity, it gained, may be, in comfort and convenience, qualities for which continental villas are not universally noted. Unlike the generality of such dwellings, consisting for the most part of dreary, ill-arranged chambers and cold wandering passages, nothing could be snugger, or better planned than the English Chateau at H——, now, alas! in existence no longer, having long since made way for the fine line of rail running from

Liége to Verviers, through a succession of mountain scenery of indescribable grandeur and beauty.

On the left, facing a door that led to the *cuisine* department and the servants' offices, as you entered the Chateau through a handsome tesselated hall, was a lofty octagon vestibule, elaborately carved and painted in imitation of Siena marble; in the middle of which played, at pleasure, a miniature fountain of the most pellucid spring water, into a circular basin of curious rock and shell work, surrounded by camellias and orange trees, and a collection of the most rare and odoriferous plants. Along each side of this very pleasant chamber were placed low-cushioned settees, affording the opportunity for a delicious lounge during a hot summer's day, amidst the fragrant perfume of flowers, and the harmonious warblings of Alice St. Clair's beautiful feathered pets, whose pretty throats sent forth incessant gushes of sweetest melody. Passing on, you were admitted through folding doors into a suite of three rooms, the

salle à manger; a *boudoir* which Mr. St. Clair had fitted up as a sort of library and study, and the *salon,* or drawing room, an elegant apartment, lighted by five windows, and extending nearly the whole southern side of the Chateau, and which opening by glass doors on to a terrace, had immediate access to the gardens by a double flight of stone steps.

Passing round the lawn and re-entering the front hall, you ascended by a spiral staircase of dark polished oak to a gallery on the first floor, from which branched off several well-proportioned sleeping rooms; the principal of which opening by glass doors, like the *salon,* to a balcony, commanded enchanting views. Higher up, on the second floor, were the servants' chambers, the laundry, and that indispensable appurtenance to all Belgian and French houses—the *grenier,* which with the *caves* are objects of amazing regard and consideration with foreigners, hardly inferior in importance to the *salon* itself. These apartments communicating by a back staircase with the lower offices, an arrangement not so frequently found in Continental residences

even of the better class, as it ought to be, gave to the H—— Chateau an air of great propriety, on which Mrs. St. Clair and Aunt Nel immensely prided themselves.

For the rest, attached to the outer offices were a two-stalled stable and coach house, piggery, poultry house, dove cot, and dog kennel:—in fact, nothing was wanting to make the Chateau at H—— as snug a place as even English heart, in exile, could wish for. The truth is, it had been so often in English hands, that what with one anglican improvement or another—an alteration here and an addition there, when the St. Clairs took it, it needed nothing but a little of their exquisite taste to render it indisputably the completest *bijou* in all Belgium. It is hardly necessary to add, that not a department but bore ample evidence that taste of no common order had been displayed; every thing was truly *tout a fait propre;* no wonder, therefore, with so many *agremens* within and without, if the exiles of H—— were happy in their mountain home.

Now, it is by no means my purpose to give

a detailed account of the St. Clairs' life among the mountains. In its daily routine it differed but little, no doubt, from what such a life must usually be—a pretty continuous scene of adventure and discoveries; of deep and spirit-stirring acknowledgment and unbounded admiration of nature's most grand and glorious works; of self-humiliation, of praise and glorification of all that is great, and good, and wonderful and wise; but, simply, to recount in this little sketch, and it professes to be nothing more than a sketch, such homely incidents of their progress during their sojourn among the hills, as I thought might be read with interest, and I would fain persuade myself not without advantage by those, alas! how many too many! who contemplating, "doing the like," have yet to learn that the view on the other side of the hill is not always better than the view on this; that, to use very hacknied but comprehensive phrases, there is little wisdom, whatever valour and variety there may seem to be, in losing the substance in pursuit of

the shadow: that saving banks were never built of rolling stones; that oil will as soon mix with water, or vinegar with milk, as Catholic with Protestant sympathies; in a word, that there is no home for an Englishman like the land that gave him birth, and that if he cannot find a resting place there, his search for it elsewhere, if ever quite successful, must presuppose such entire alienation of heart, as leaves it very immaterial what clime or creed is most favoured with his patronage.

Of this class of adventurers most assuredly were not the St. Clairs; nor must it be inferred, because they were so far happy in their mountain home, that they were any more aliens at heart, dear reader, than you or I, who love our own precious little isle better than all the rest of the world put together, and with good reason. No, no! truer, stauncher hearts never beat in Britons' breasts than the St. Clairs; but they had embarked on what they conceived to be a meritorious enterprise; had pitched their tent and commenced their task, and conforming to cir-

cumstances, were obeying, not the dictates of discontent or any disaffection, but, as they fondly believed, of a self-sacrificing spirit. However we may be inclined to question the prudence of such a sacrifice, of the good intentions that led to it there can be no doubt. Alas! for the like we need be in no hurry ever to pass judgment;—good, bad, or indifferent, they never fail to provide their own punishment or reward.

The St. Clairs, we repeat, were happy in their mountain home. Now, those who deem such a mountain life fraught only with savage wildness and unedifying monotony, view it probably from a distance, or are little aware of the many sources it affords for edification and amusement, to those who know how to avail themselves of them. To the lover of the beauties of nature in all their sublimest variety, and to the sportsman in particular, it must have unequalled charms, and, to judge from his larder, no one knew better how to handle his gun and fly rod than Aubrey St. Clair.

Unlike the majority of idlers abroad, it could never be said of St. Clair that time was a commodity that hung heavy on his hands. He seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of never failing resources within himself; what a treasure to any man even in the midst of crowds; how much greater in the bosom of seclusion and retirement.—What with the education of his boys, his only girl Alice, a bud of fairest promise, devolving on the assiduous and affectionate superintendance of Aunt Nel, than whom no one was better qualified to give the finishing touches; his snug, well selected little library; the cultivation of his garden, which he took immense pride in; their botanical and geological excursions; his game bag and fishing basket; to say nothing of visits of charity and kindliness, far and wide, to the abodes of poverty and sickness, under the special auspices and personal observation of his excellent Lady, whose medicine chest had wrought almost as many miracles as the blessed St. Vierge herself; it might with perfect truth be

said that the day was never too long for Aubrey St. Clair;—and the same might with equal justice be asserted of every member of his amiable and well regulated family.

It was a charming sight to see them assembled often, after the toils of the day, under the shade of the wide spreading Acasias and Laburnums that formed a natural bower, with the assistance of the least possible art imaginable, on the lawn that fronted the Chateau, all looking the picture of health and content. Mr. St. Clair, good man! spade or spud in hand: Mrs. St. Clair never without a needle or Pinnock's Catechisms: Aunt Nel, dear, kind, generous Aunt Nel, with her *crochet* or embroidery in her lap, ever ready with a kind word or a new story: six fine rosy-cheeked boys round them, listening, as all dutiful boys ought, to the precious precepts of wisdom ever falling from their instructor's lips; and Alice, the only girl, a lovely creature of seventeen next birthday, fast budding into beauteous womanhood, with the face of an angel and the figure of a sylph, so beauti-

ful, so graceful, so artless, so affectionate and confiding, so good, so gentle, and thanks to Aunt Nel so sensible and accomplished! what parents' hearts but might have swelled with pride and exultation at the contemplation of such a promising progeny.

Never were doating parents more blessed in a daughter than were Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair. Did the boys look patterns of neatness every day of the week; whose needle had been at work, whose taste so correctly displayed? It reflected the utmost credit on Mrs. St. Clair.—"Alice, my love," she would often say, "a really accomplished woman should know how to make a pudding as well as play the piano." Mrs. St. Clair was right, she did not lack the means to send her, had she desired it, to one of the first finishing schools in Bryanstone Square; but that excellent and right-thinking mother hoped to see her child excel in many more useful things than playing polkas, dancing the *deux temps*, speaking bad French, and stepping like a Countess into a carriage.

Incalculable were the blessings that flowed from such inestimable doctrines. Was there always something tempting at the family board; was there a particularly delicious cake or dish of sweet-meats on Sundays or birth-days; to whose skill and provident care were they all indebted for so many treats;—if there was never a string off papa's collars; a button too little on his shirts or a hole in his gloves, whose watchful eye presided over his little comforts;—if little Lancelot or Noel could make pot-hooks and repeat their hymns better than most boys double their age, to whose guidance and instruction was their progress owing? Well might parents be proud of such a daughter; well might Mrs. St. Clair sometimes heave a deep-drawn sigh when the thought crossed her that she must some day resign her sweet child, her darling, dutiful Alice to the arms of some bewhiskered husband, and well might her fond father be pardoned for declaring in his own mind that no one less than an Earl, at least, ought ever to call him father-in-law.

CHAPTER III.

TALK of a happy family! numberless as have been the pictures painted by pen and pencil on this favourite subject, and endless the variety of ways in which it has been handled, the eye neither of poet nor painter ever imagined anything more beautiful or edifying than the great family *chef-d'-œuvre* of the English emigrants at H——. Many gems on the same subject are to be met with that merit our warmest praises, and afford studies full of interest and instruction.

One celebrated artist, by the way, has given us a vivid illustration of domestic concord by placing in the right hand of each and every member of *his* happy family—nine in

number, an untasted orange, not one of whom, evidently, would commence the attack till the impartial parents gave the word of command. Could anything be more affecting than this?—proving at a glance the indispensible necessity of strict impartiality and unanimity of purpose, as primary elements of domestic bliss. There must be no preferences, my dear Mrs. Primrose, and nothing so essential to promote among your little ones, rest assured, as simplicity and reciprocity of dispositions.

Another great artist, more speculative in his treatment, has made a splendid hit (which they say may be seen any day by permission of the fortunate possessor, Mr. Jacob Dobson, of Rhododendron Lodge, Ramsgate) of a large family party of the Dobsons, father, mother, two remarkably ductile looking youths, their sons; the five Misses Dobson, as like as five peas; their gentle cousin Lucy, and Uncle and Aunt Potts, enjoying a donkey excursion to Pegwell Bay; followed up by half-a-dozen ragged young whip-

pers in, with cudgels, at the tail ends of the cavalcade. No,—*enjoying* is not the word; you can see with half an eye that the Dobsons are merciful persons, and sit their poor beasts as if they felt for them: now, this is not the way to enjoy a donkey ride, however, it may be worthy of a vote of thanks from the society for prevention of cruelty to animals. The whole piece is full of moral; but the task must have been a prodigious one. "The Flitch of Bacon," they say, has been carried off by the Dobsons thrice within the last half century:—the bundle of sticks is their arms—*Vis unita fortior* their motto; no wonder, therefore, that Dobson persisted in having a work that was to hand the Dobsons down to posterity, in strict keeping with their general character and aspect. The artist had no alternative but to paint the Dobsons as they saw fit to be painted, or not at all. From time immemorial undeviating one-mindedness had characterized the Dobson family, not only in pursuits and politics, but in all the minor matters of life. For ages

there had been, so to speak, but one eye, one mind, one interest among them;—they had seen alike, thought alike, wished alike, dined alike, dressed alike, dreamed alike, prayed alike, and died alike; and evil befall the day that ever brought its corrupting innovations into the bosom of the Dobson family.

It was a stupendous task, we repeat, that the artist undertook, viz: to depict, and with effect too, twelve human figures, let alone the six grooms in attendance, and twelve donkeys,—all nearly of the same neutral tint, in little more than two colours: but where are the difficulties true genius will not surmount? Had it not been for a row of pollard oaks in the foreground, amounting curiously enough to exactly twelve, which afford a judicious relief to the sandy evenness of the road, and, happily, were in keeping with the general harmony of the design, and a slight dash of defiance in the handling of the sky, after Turner, which admirably contrasts with the sombre tone of the rest of the picture, and which the artist insisted must be left to his

own discretion, there's no knowing how he could ever have achieved the wonders expected from him.

But the burden of the tale is what most commands our admiration. How admirable is Dobson's evident sympathy for the poor, ill-used beast that he bestrides, and which he keeps tight reined up at a steady walk; how capital the calm, composed, self-approving benignity of Mrs. D.'s smile, as she contemplates her husband and seven dutiful children, true Dobsons—veritable chips of the old block; her amiable sister-in-law; her sainted brother, and her sweet engaging little niece, Lucy Potts, reflections of herself and each other; not a pin to choose between them, fraternity in its fullest sense beaming in their every look;—it is a beautiful picture! None but a man of surpassing talent dared have undertaken to pourtray, on a single canvas, twelve donkeys, twelve pollard oaks, and a family party amounting exactly to a dozen, in two colours. Among the old masters you may look in vain for any thing to be com-

pared with it for daring, although they frequently allowed themselves considerable license; but, our modern Teniers disdained seemingly, to confine himself to the cramped rules of the schools; he has struck out a path for himself, and as a convincing proof, if any were wanting, that such talent never goes unappreciated, they say that ever since this his great hit of the Dobson family, the number of the long-eared tribe whose portraits he has been called on to immortalize, is incalculable.

Many more first rate works on the same heart-stirring theme have been presented to the world; even, Wilkie and Landseer have not deemed it unworthy their inimitable pencils; and some of the best Dutch masters have, we know, left us gems on which the fancy delights to revel. But, of all the pictures (now we are on the subject) of a happy family, not even excepting the St. Clair masterpiece, none that ever I saw can compete for grandeur of composition and perfection of detail, with the far famed "happy family" that may

ofttimes be seen of a fine day at the foot of Vauxhall Bridge.

It is without exception, that every one will admit, the *ne plus ultra* of happy families. I wouldn't give a fig for the man who could contemplate it as he ought, and not return to his home better and wiser than he set out. Doubtless, many have thought like myself while gazing, with a crowd of other delighted beholders, at the habitation of this happy family and its enviable inmates, what a contrast to the domestic circles of thousands allied by closest ties of kindred and relationship; what a scandal to selfish, discontented man!—thus to witness the most perfect harmony and good feeling even among the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, not only with instincts and habits totally dissimilar, but by nature formed to wage war with and prey upon each other. What a study for contentious man; I say—fox, pullet: hound, hare: cat, mouse: rabbit, weasel: hawk, sparrow: owl, bat: rat, ferret: and divers others of equally uncongenial natures, here

dwelling together on terms of the utmost peace and amity, and, to judge from their comely looks and placid demeanour, with no complaint to make:—the hare at hide and seek with the hound; the sparrow roosting on the hawk's back; the mouse nibbling the tip of the cat's tail; the ferret playing at leap frog with the rat; and Reynard not even licking his jaws at the sight of the fat pullet beside him. O, Wilberforce, Wilberforce! thou should'st have seen "the happy family" at Vauxhall Bridge, before thou had'st asked for freedom for thy black brethren in distant lands; yes, happy, though in bondage! The consequences of *their* early days of freedom were such as might have been anticipated; and it has often occurred to me what would be the first impulse of the various members of this fraternal household, if their prison door were thrown open? it is difficult to conceive what would be the first evidence of *their* appreciation of the boon offered them. They were, certainly, not starved or coerced into terms of mutual friendship and forbearance;

their comely aspects bore ample evidence to the contrary; theirs was, evidently, no merciless task master; so, we must conclude that a state of captivity together had not all the terrors often erroneously attached to it; that it had, at all events, called forth feelings of mutual sympathy and regard, such as we may suppose are excited in the breasts of prisoners of war, of whatever clime or creed, huddled together in one common apartment, where any indulgence of personal animosity or unsociableness would only serve to make matters worse, and aggravate the general calamity.

Liberty, forsooth! who with a grain of sense would quit a prison, with plenty of solid pudding every day of the week, for the privilege, too often the only one gained, of kicking his heels to keep time with the grumblings of an empty belly? Sages and slaves may talk as they will of the blessings of liberty, but freedom sometimes drags after it a far heavier chain than slavery or servitude ever wore. How often has the poor captive, when his

dungeon door has at last been thrown open, begged to be allowed to remain the tenant of his dreary cell? If more than this be required to satisfy that liberty may sometimes not be worth a pinch of snuff, I will tell you a little simple story, dear reader, that comes, *apropos*, to my recollection—is, moreover, a fact witnessed by my own eyes, and an incontrovertible proof, I take it, (putting aside the grand principle of the question, and all such stuff and nonsense, about which there is no necessity just now to trouble our heads) that there's many a worse berth than bondage.

THE CAPTIVE.

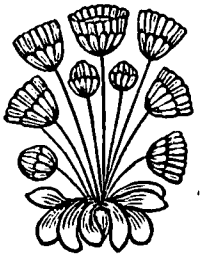
Philanthropy in brightest hues may paint
The joys of liberty, but oftentimes
The freeman drags by far a heavier chain
Than ever yet was worn by serf or slave.
A pet Canary bird, poor captive like,
Within his prison grate had often gaz'd
Upon the pleasant fields and smiling trees,
And sigh'd for freedom, nay, indulg'd a thought,
If e'er his gaoler left the wicket loose,

He'd flee away unto the distant hills.
The long'd for moment came, his prison door
One day unguarded was a moment left,
And not once casting a last look behind,
Or snatching e'en a few crumbs for support
Upon his weary journey, off he flew,
Nor knowing where to wend his headlong flight.
"Stop truant, stop!" the affrighted Bertha cried,
"Ah, wherefore thus requite my tender care?
Haste, neighbours, haste the wanderer to recall,
A crown for him who brings me back my pet."
Within the branches of a lofty elm,
Unable to pursue his further flight,
Breathless and terrified the culprit sate.
"Ungrateful varlet!" bawled the shouting mob,
"To thus repay so kind a mistress' care;
Come down, come down, no mercy else we'll show."
But still, unheeding their indignant cries,
Off flew the fugitive o'er hill and dale.
O'erspent at last with terror and fatigue,
Again within the covert's friendly shade,
Far from his enemies he shelter took.
Hopeless the capture now; fast o'er the vale
The shades of eve their thickening shadows threw;
The village swains retraced their homeward steps
To the next ale house, there to vent their rage
And con the matter o'er their pipes and beer.
"Ah woe is me!" quoth Bertha, "woe is me!
And I so tender too: if e'er I get
The faithless wanderer under ward again,

I'll be his match, or Bertha's not my name."
" Depend on't, mistress Bertha, he's not victuall'd
A two days' journey this here bout to take;
Afore to-morrow's dinner, take my word,
Right glad he'll be to shake hands, mistress Bertha,
Or Matthew Muggins' not my name, I trow."
Muggins was right: the friendless wanderer
Had tasted quite enough of liberty:
No friends for him the world had in it, shunn'd
And pecked at, buffeted and spurned;
Without credentials, or the means to purchase
Those services the world ne'er gives for nought;
With none an ear of sympathy to lend,
Or pity feel for sorrow's plaintive tale,
He gazed upon the barren waste around,
Cast back a thought on his deserted home,
And in the anguish of an aching heart,
Began to think that even that sad home
Was better far than freedom such as his:
That even a prison had its benefits;
That liberty without a friend, or roof
To offer shelter from the pelting storm,
Or meal to soothe starvation's gnawing pangs,
Was sweeter far in theory than truth.
Full of sad thoughts like these, as fast as wings
Could carry him, as Muggins had foretold,
His weary flight the wanderer retraced;
And long before the mid-day watch, was seen
Beating his breast against his prison bars,
Asking, as plain as language could implore,

To be restored to his captivity.
Though Bertha threaten'd in her angry mood,
If e'er again the runaway she caught
She'd " be his match, " the abject, piteous state
Of the poor captive, melted e'en her heart:
And master Muggins has been heard to say,
He caught her once, a tear upon her sleeve,
Lending an ear of pity to the tale
Of the poor penitent, and whisp'ring hope
With all the tenderness a gaoler might.

* * *



CHAPTER IV.

THERE is no greater blessing for a man, in whatever position or circumstances of life he may be placed, than to have the elements of happiness within himself; to be, as far as possible, independent of those extraneous sources from which contentment is sought by the majority of mankind, and which so frequently prove but dried fountains and barren wastes.

No man, perhaps, possessed within himself more ample resources for contentment, in spite of that great drawback to his self-approval, "the falsest step that he ever took in his life," than Aubrey St. Clair; and had he had nothing to depend on but his own exer-

tions, and no siren of a beloved sister at his elbow to entice him from his purpose, he must, with the abilities at his command, have become in due course, if not Lord High Chancellor, at all events an ornament to the profession he had chosen.

His greatest fault was irresolution, and a distrust of his own powers that cramped his best energies and often rendered abortive his noblest resolutions. He saw clearly, distinguished with accuracy, appreciated warmly, and generally resolved with unerring judgment. Everything in his hands seemed full of *promise;* his plans were perfection, his arguments conviction: none knew what was right, what others ought to do, or in what they were deficient, better than St. Clair. To hear him talk, to see him often act under the influence of the best motives, you would have regarded him as an oracle of wisdom and prudence. He could direct those who needed guidance, no one better; and yet, with his eyes seemingly wide open, and the way well known, he would lose himself. However good

an advocate he might be of another's cause, he was certainly not the best champion of his own. His will was good, his talent fully adequate to the accomplishment of his end; but, alas! the main ingredient in the composition of true success was wanting—that spirit of resolution and patient perseverance without which no great work was ever brought to completion.

It was probably this feeling of distrust, this misgiving of himself, that, unnerving his best resolutions, shook his faith also in the old Chancellor's predictions, meant no doubt kindly to encourage him to "keep his shoulder to the wheel." He knew his young friend's abilities, and no one knew better to what those abilities rightly employed, must lead; but he was not ignorant of his weak point, which he foresaw, if indulged, would mar the brightest prospects; and judged, therefore, sensibly enough, that to hold out the promise of distinction would be a surer incentive to industry in a mind constituted like St. Clair's, than to enlarge on the dangers of a state of brief-

lessness, which with the possession of an independent eight hundred a year, could have no great terrors.

There is little doubt that if Aubrey St. Clair, like the majority of rising juniors at the bar, had depended for the most part on his wits, the old Chancellor would not have been far out in his reckoning. Foggs and Bumpton, who neither in talent nor address were fit to hold a candle to him, would have soon been left far behind; and Cornelius Pym, at such an immeasurable distance, as to render his neighbourly reminiscences of No. — Pump Court almost a marvel to himself:—but the eight hundred a year ruined it all.

It is very seldom indeed that we read in the histories of eminent professional men, that the top step in the ladder of preferment is reached by those whose progress is impeded by such a weight as eight hundred a year, or anything like it, in their breeches pockets. The jockey that rides lightest *(cæteris paribus)* has the best chance of arriving soonest at the winning post; and if we consult the

annals of our most gifted lawyers and physicians, (to divinity the argument will not so well apply) we shall see that Turkey carpets, soft settees and dainty fare have rarely been the precursors to the woolsack, or the President's chair. And this accounts for the fact, that judicial honors are not hereditary—that no man has less chance of being a judge than the son of a judge; and why?—The father mounted to the top step of the ladder by dint of patient plodding perseverance; pressing on progressively, step by step, despite every discouragement; keeping his neck steadily to the collar, straining every nerve, heart and soul applying himself to the up-hill task before him, till, perfect in the art of climbing, he surmounted every difficulty, and reached the honoured goal of his ambition.

But not only did he work hard; he fared sparingly, was humbly lodged and plainly clad; rose early, and did not begrudge the midnight oil; denied himself, for the sake of those beloved objects at home, whose welfare and advancement were no less precious to him

than his own, every luxury: not an idle shilling did he spend, for was not more than every shilling sorely taxed for chambers' rent, and those most trying but indispensable costs, the costs of circuit? When was he ever absent from his post?—it was a marvel to himself sometimes, how he got from town to town; but there he was, nay, would have pledged all he had in the world; and Bella parted, I verily believe without a sigh, with the beautiful silver tea pot, sugar basin, and cream jug, her kind Aunt Charlotte's present on her marriage, and which next to her husband and children she prized, seemingly, above every thing on earth, rather than he should be absent at Assizes.

Such was the father's plan and progress. The son's career commences under brighter auspices:—he is the child of luxury, rolls in the lap of indulgence; is splendidly lodged, daintily fed, and elegantly attired; keeps fashionable hours, has a footman at his call, and a carriage to take him round the park when his health requires an airing; and though he

show his face in court but three times a week, and barely a friendly brief reward his constancy on Circuit, there is a good dinner, a luxurious bed, a happy home, and approving smiles to greet him all the same. He may be a first rate scholar, a prize man, a dutiful son, an affectionate brother, an exemplary member of society, but he must have studied the six first books of Euclid to little advantage—he must be but slightly versed in the rationale of cause and effect, if he delude himself into the fond belief that such superfine qualifications, *per se*, compose the stuff of which a judge is made.

Now, Aubrey St. Clair had not the disadvantage of having a judge for a father; his yearnings towards the woolsack were not neutralized by any such incompatible; but he had £800 a year independent of the attorneys, and I will leave it to any one competent to form an opinion, whether this was not every bit as fatal to him as if he had been son and heir of the Chief Baron himself?

There can be nothing clearer than that he

owed the downfall of all his brightest hopes to the balsamic reflection that he could snap his fingers at the attorneys, if he pleased. I have often heard him say, "from the moment this thought got possession of his mind, Foggs and Bumpton seemed more and more determined to devour him with caresses every time they met him."

After all, perhaps it was, as he said, "Hobson's choice" with him—either to keep Cornelius Pym company for the remainder of his days, or to cut the connexion and leave them all a clear coast. Be this as it may, having made his election, struck his tent, pushed off his boat, and fairly set sail on his new expedition, which he had no doubt would bring them all at last into a haven of peace and plenty, he wisely resolved, however the possession of independence might have so far marred his success, and robbed the world of one of its brightest ornaments, it should still prove in his hands as great a blessing as was possible that careful stewardship could make it. So far well. With his usual happy faci-

lity at laying out plans, nothing could be more promising than the course he had chalked out. The vessel that he commanded, if not a fast, was a safe sailer; was indifferently well freighted, nay, for a small craft, richly stored; nor should it lack the needful ballast to keep it steady. Its name was The Devoted; prudence should preside at the helm, caution furl the sails, patience ply the oar, unanimity be the pass-word of its crew, and the port to which it was bound—the land flowing with milk and honey.

Happily for St. Clair and those who trusted to his pilotage, he was not a mere enthusiast; he was by no means one of those who, ever under the influence of visionary views of fruition, regard men and things only through the flattering medium of their own imaginations. He was not one of those restless beings who seem constitutionally incapable of ever knowing peace; over whom a fatality appears to hang which they cannot shake off; to whom the direst experience, the most palpable visitations fail to bring advantage; before whose

visions a film seems ever thickening; to whom peace and profit in this world would seem to be denied; who are perpetually toiling against the tide, hunting the shadow, weaving ropes of sand, rolling the Sisyphan stone up the interminable ascent; striving, straining on to some distant goal which their utmost efforts can never reach. Nor must we suppose that he was one of those daring adventurers whose reckless navigation must inevitably sink them; who, though for a time they may cruise away, and tack about, and bear up gallantly before the wind, steering undaunted through rocks, and shoals, and quicksands, so long as skies are fair, yet, are but hurrying, as the storm approaches, to the whirlpool that in a moment when they are least upon their guard, shall hurl them and all that trusted to their pilotage to destruction.

No, Aubrey St. Clair, if no master spirit, did not overrate his own powers; on the contrary that self-distrust—that constant foreshadowing consciousness, or rather fear of

his own insufficiency, was his chief failing: in one sense it may have proved a blessing, for, if it retarded his advancement, as it most certainly did, it served as a check, may be, to the occasional excesses of a naturally enthusiastic disposition, and kept him and all he most cherished clear of that fatal rock, to split on which, is indeed to become a wreck.

CHAPTER V.

HOW differently we view things at a distance to what we do when better acquainted with their real merits. This applies in nothing more particularly than to our dreams and anticipations of foreign travel and adventure, of the true nature of which we know nothing, perhaps, except by hearsay.

We sit at home, it may be, in that home which is not what it once was, or might have been, had we known in what a home's true joys consist, conjuring up in our imaginations all sorts of fanciful images in the distance; investing them with a charm and consequence derived only from our ignorance of their realities. We look around us—all that meets

our gaze is tame, and stale, and spiritless; old scenes, time honoured objects and associations that once were themes of our warmest praise and pride, hold us no longer by their soft endearing ties. We deem that prejudice or pusillanimity, which our parents, and they were happy in their generation, handed down to us, as of all virtues the most adorning; but the march of intellect, the spirit of enterprise and innovation have made us sensible of many things of which they were ignorant. Alas! how many have to unlearn, if they would be wise, what they have been taught, and to find out, to their cost, in what the real worth of knowledge consists. Like all else precious, its quality not quantity, and that must be judged of by its fruits, is the only test of its intrinsic value.

But modern lights have disclosed great wonders: there is much for the seeking; the race seemingly is to the swift and the battle to the strong—the soul yearns for action; time and distance have been brought into

subjection to modern science; there is no limit to human ambition—it has encompassed the whole habitable globe as with a span; the spirit thus emancipated can be fettered no longer; the harness that once kept it confined steadily to its work, now frets and galls; it looks despondingly to the long, dull, dreary road before it, and though it is the same and no other by which thousands before have travelled to fame and fortune, may there not be a shorter cut to the same desired end?

What if it be true that others have tried the short cut often before, and got out of their beat, and into bogs and pits, and never reached their journey's end;—might not the fault have been in their own mismanagement, their want of foresight, or courage, or perseverance:—is A's failure any argument against B's success? It is but labour lost to parade examples:—there are some who in the very jaws of death itself would seem to fancy themselves immortal; it is contending with the winds to cope with them—they are scathless; let them go, waste not many words

upon them;—wish them well, predict nothing uncharitable;—they are off with their idols, bid them God speed!

There was this material difference in St. Clair's case to many others of a similar cast, that, however sanguine he might be in any undertaking in which he had embarked, his fondness for his idols extended only so far as they required no *ultra* proof of devotedness on his part; he was far too diffident and irresolute ever to become a staunch disciple of any creed but the one in which he was baptized. This lukewarmness, if it argued want of stedfastness, had saved him, doubtless, from many a lash; thus, when shaking hands for the last time before he stepped into the boat about to bear him from his native shores, I could not bring myself to believe that more than a few fleeting seasons would divide us. I had little doubt but that, ere the revolution of another year, we should be again sitting over our filberts and Madeira together in a snug turkey carpetted parlour in old England, chatting, after the good old fashion, of past

times, and settling the affairs of the nation. But in this I was mistaken; time continued its flight—year after year rolled away, still Aubrey St. Clair was an absentee.

Not a month passed all this time but the post brought me a regular account of his goings on, his plans, pursuits, progress, and impressions: how gloriously was proceeding the work of retrenchment with all the beatitudes of a mountain life. "Gad, sir," said he, in one of his early letters, "the Chateau, grounds and all, don't stand me in more than a thousand francs a year, contributions included; and that bit of a box in Park street was £150, without taxes — there's a saving! Then, only look, Alan, my boy, how we live —beef and mutton fivepence a pound, never less than eightpence in South Audley street; —then, we make our own bread, Kate says at half-price;—milk, with the cream on it, a gallon for sixpence;—poultry enough for six with good appetites, for eighteenpence—what say you to that? Fish, too, by basketfuls, for the catching, and as for fruit and vegetables, you

may have them almost for asking:—think of capital claret, too, at twenty-pence a bottle. Gad, sir! you should hear the boys talk Walloon:—Nel and her pupil too taken every where for Parisians; and as for Madame, no saint of Chèvremont stands higher in the estimation of her neighbours. If there were but a few friends after one's own heart within a walk;—Harrow under the hill for the boys, and above all, good old Dr. Leslie's pretty rural church and snug parsonage opposite, instead of that grim forbidding Catholic structure, and Monsr. le Curé's prim bachelor's lodgings, gad, Alan! H—— would be a paradise;—but you must come and judge for yourself."

Now, as I made it a point never to let long vacations pass away without spending a pretty long holiday at the Chateau, I had abundant opportunities of testifying to the advantages of a mountain over a Park street life, as far as costs of meat and milk and butter went, let alone cigars, clarets, and old cognacs; but as I could not but perceive that

many other equally indispensable requisites of the domestic *ménage*, such as sugar, candles, clothing, and most other articles of English daily requirement, were only to be obtained abroad at prices which would be considered ruinous even in South Audley street; to say nothing of the pathetic reminiscences of my self-exiled friend of the still fondly cherished scenes of his own early and happiest days, I yet had hopes that the day was not far distant when I should see some of the youngsters climbing, too, up Harrow's classic hill to the highest posts of academic honor, and one and all of them again amongst the most welcome visiters at the old parsonage house.

These thoughts were ever uppermost in my mind during my visits at the Chateau. Nothing could be more delightful than these *réunions*, and had I had only my own gratification to consider, could have desired no pleasanter way of spending my autumns; but I had a duty, as I conceived, to perform towards my friend, and was determined never

to let him rest till I got him safe and sound back again, if not a next door neighbour of Cornelius Pym's, at all events within easy reach of his excellent friend and patron the old Chancellor, who had dropped a pretty broad hint more than once to me in confidence of an expected vacant mastership in Chancery, "that would have just suited that silly fellow, St. Clair, if he had known on which side his bread was buttered."

It was of no use, I knew, to treat the matter too seriously, or take him, as I often felt inclined, roundly to task; he would have only launched forth into all sorts of ludicrous reflections on his Pump Court achievements, and fairly overwhelmed me with the blessings of low rent, cheap living, invigorating mountain breezes, French cookery, and German tutors; so, letting no opportunity slip to put in a word in due season, as I best might, without wounding his pride, or exciting his apprehensions of any furtive design on his liberty, on which he prided himself as much as anything, I suffered things to speak for

themselves, trusting that in the natural course of events he would be brought to his senses by the convictions of his own judgment, or that something would turn up that by disgusting his self esteem or engaging it in a more worthy cause, would promote the desired end better than all my sermons.

We had returned one day at the close of a beautiful autumn evening from a stroll across the mountains to Tilff, during which he had seemed unusually thoughtful, and were sitting together on a favourite rustic bench of his own workmanship, beneath the cooling shade of a magnificent weeping ash, waiting for the summons to the evening meal, when, after a mutual silence of some minutes which I had no wish to be the first to break, "Alan," said he, "I sometimes think to myself how Foggs and Bumpton would regard my sort of life—what they would say of Aubrey St. Clair in his mountain home."

"Say?" said I, determined to humour him, "that it is a paradise worthy a divinity like * * * *."

"Yes—yes," said he, catching me up good humouredly, "there can't be a question of that; but I can fancy what a contempt they would have for my Elysian existence, nevertheless."

"Foggs and Bumpton be hanged!—what could such mere grovelling mortals as they know of the abodes of the gods?"

"I shouldn't wonder, though," resumed he, after a short pause, "if Bumpton's making his two thousand a year by this time."

"And so he ought," said I, carelessly, "they say he sits down with Mrs. B. and the little ones to the roast beef every Sunday, a baker's dozen."

There was a pause again while you might have counted twenty, and he was perhaps solving the little problem suggested by my last remark, viz.—if it take two thousand a year at least to feed, clothe, educate, and decently provide for eleven Bumpton brats, how much will be required to sustain, maintain, and suitably set off in life seven St. Clairs?

"In sober truth, you think, then," resumed

he, gravely, "that I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"Why so?"

"How can it be otherwise, unless Aubrey St. Clair can make seven hundred a year do miracles which Bumpton wouldn't dream of with two thousand?"

"You forget," said I, condolingly, "the house in Bedford Place; Chambers in Fig Tree Court;—John and Percival at Eton, Fred and Harry at Rugby;—the brougham, too, and page, and nursery governess."

"But he's second senior on circuit already, and will be Solicitor-General, if ministers keep in, before he's forty—as sure as my name's Aubrey."

"But what a phiz he carries—pale as parchment, and his hair gray as a badger:—none of your fresh mountain breezes in Fig Tree Court, eh, Aubrey?"

"The wig covers all blemishes, and there's a fine blow in the Temple Gardens, Alan."

"I don't think I ever saw him taking the air but once," added I 'and then he seemed

to be so confused and ashamed of himself, after the first two or three turns among the nursery maids, that he gave it up—escaped as fast as legs could carry him, and, Bumble says, has never since been seen within the railings."

"That was just like him—I suppose he twigged some curious eyes overhauling him through an opera glass from the walk; he was always so sensitive;—could never eat a mouthful in hall if you looked at him: he never seemed at his ease but when he was up to his neck in work; on parade he was like a fish out of water, and absent as an eel. They say he got into a "bus" one day, thinking of something else, and was carried to the Bank before he recollected that he was within a hundred yards of his own door when he got in, and that his dinner had been waiting at least two hours."

"Indisputable evidence of a great genius," said I.—"Bumpton's as safe to be Solicitor General as Aubrey St. Clair *was* to be Lord High Chancellor, *assiduitas incredibilia præstat.*"

"Yes, yes, that's all very pretty: but the proverb says, too, *ne tentes, aut perfice*, don't it?"

"True, but it says also *qui fugit molam fugit farinam*, remember that."

Another long pause, during which it was evident he was making a personal affair of the old adage.

"There's no denying it, Alan," said he after a tremendous internal struggle, "I know *I am* constitutionally of an indolent disposition—it was born with me, I can't help it. If I had had half Bumpton's assiduity with my ambition, gad, sir! I should either have made a rapid fortune, or gone to the dogs in no time."

"Perhaps, then, it's best as it is," suggested I, "at all events you are on the safe side."

"That's a consolation at any rate," assented he, rubbing his knee; "certainly it is as well when some people tell you how much they make, to ask them what they spend; but there's no use concealing it—my confounded modesty has been my bane from my

cradle; *certum pete finem,* may be carried too far;—I've been taking aim, Alan, all my life, and hav'nt hit the mark, seemingly, yet."

"The £800 a year clear of the attorneys, my dear fellow, was more to blame than the native modesty, take my word for that. The best marksmen are those, depend on't, who rely for their dinner on the fruits of their own dexterity."

"Perhaps so," said he,—"the fact is, Alan, I was never cut out for a keen sportsman, any body can see that; I prefer trusting for my dinner to the cook shop rather than the chase. I never could stick to hard work, I love ease, the fine arts, poetry, painting, music, flowers, all that breathes of the sublime and beautiful, even to the romantic, and such natures are seldom destined to succeed in the mere business of life; but have they any use, eh, Alan? tell me that."

"So long," answered I, "as they may legitimately indulge their *penchants,* they may at least be harmless."

"Is that all?" said he, disappointedly;—

"I often wish, Alan, I had been brought up to the Church."

"What next?"

"It would have suited me exactly;—a country life is my delight;—I love retirement, and the incumbent of a snug parsonage among the hills—that would have been a life of usefulness as well as contemplation."

"It may not be too late now," said I, willing to indulge him, "you've only to drop a hint to the Chancellor and you're a made man."

"I'm in earnest, Alan, a village pastor's life would suit me to a t—."

"No doubt, my dear fellow;—if you could carry your gun, have trout of your own catching every other day for your dinner in season, and now and then follow the hounds to cover, I don't know any one would make a prettier sporting parson."

"You forget," said he, impatiently, "the ever varying and engrossing duties of a pastor's life."

"Seven hundred a year tithe clear would spoil it all. If they didn't soon make you a

bishop, you'd be rung out of the parish in less than twelve months."

"You devoted Londoners," continued he, not seeming to notice my objection, "that know little of the pursuits or pleasures of a country life, except what a few weeks' rustication teaches you in long vacations, can have little conception of its delights, its resources, avocations, and capabilities of peace and profit:—you, who only find in it a short lived relaxation from the fatigues and excitement of a town life, what can you understand of its true nature, or how appreciate its infinite sources of enjoyment? You may smile, Alan, my fine fellow, but it is the flowers, the hedges, the green fields and sylvan glades, their innocent sweet simple sports and pastimes that draw the crowds from the metropolis, and when these have yielded their charms and grown stale, are deserted as monotonous and wearisome. Ask the village pastor, when necessity calls him to that metropolis, what are his thoughts and feelings amidst its heartless scenes of fashion and

frivolity?—think, Alan, what joy must be his, when he again beholds the spire of his own humble but beloved Church modestly raising its head amidst the treasured scenes of all he holds dear on earth:—there is his pride, his wealth, his friends and flock waiting to welcome him to a peaceful, happy home; nor are the duties that call him there—works of charity and love, to be dispensed with; nor would he exchange them, probably, for all the world besides. Whose sphere of usefulness is more extensive, whose duties, so consonant with the true spirit of Christian zeal? all hearts, as all doors are open to him; fame, Alan, trumpets not forth his good deeds, nor may a mitre crown his earthly labours, but his reward, I take it, is nevertheless certain."

At this moment the graceful sylph-like figure of Alice St. Clair, crossing the lawn with a little basket of fresh picked flowers in her hand, put a stop to the enthusiastic imagery in which her father's poetical fervour was revelling. As she approached us, it was

easy to see, by the cloud on her brow, that something was amiss.

"Isn't it a shame?" said she, presenting me with a moss bud for my button hole, "not content with stealing the strawberries, and apricots; tearing down the grape vines, and picking all my beautiful dahlias, they have robbed me now of nearly every rose."

"You will indeed lose all your roses, you gipsy," interrupted her fond father, casting an anxious glance on the bare head and neck of his fair delicate child, "if you are out so late without hat or shawl."

"I just ran to the holly walk, Mr. Alan, to pick some roses and verbina for Fred's birth-day cake to-morrow, and these are all they've left me: isn't it enough to provoke an angel?"

"The ungrateful hounds!" exclaimed her father, evidently annoyed more than he chose to express;—"do what you will for these Belgians, live among them, spend your last franc piece with them, respect their laws, conform to all their customs, contribute to their charities, help their poor, visit their

sick, be the best friend or neighbour that you may, you can seldom gain a footing in their affections."

"Abominable!" cried I, "we must lay an information without a moment's delay before the Burgomaster, that's clear."

"Not before supper, any how," smiled St. Clair, rising, as Aunt Nel appeared on the terrace lustily ringing a little silver hand bell to summon us to supper, "Gad, Alan! my mountain walk has given me the appetite of a hunter;—how is it with you, my boy?"

CHAPTER VI.

IT must certainly be conceded that for imparting tone to the stomach and cheerfulness to the temper, there is nothing like vigorous healthy exercise, and no stimulant so likely to give a man a good appetite for his supper as a four hours' brisk walk over the mountains. No doubt more than half the maladies to which human flesh is heir, and nearly all of which the dyspeptic sufferer in particular complains, have their origin in the neglect of that one thing needful to good health. Abernethy—no mean authority, laid it down as a rule that every one, if possible, should walk regularly every day till they felt it a luxury to sit down. There is no question that the

steady adoption of this excellent rule would do more for the victims of wealth and luxury than all the digestive nostrums ever compounded. I speak feelingly, having for years been a martyr to blue pill and bitter tinctures, æther, opium, hot water, arsenic, prussic acid, and heaven knows what else besides; till, by pursuing Abernethy's maxims for twelve months, and otherwise consulting the dictates of nature and common sense, I was the gainer of as sound a constitution as falls to the lot of most men, and, moreover, of a good hundred a year into the bargain.

I remember when, as a *dernier ressort*, I once went in a very nervous shaky state to consult him, with little expectation of any material benefit. No man in his line has had more humorous stories told of him than Abernethy, but I can vouch for the truth of what I am going to relate, every word of it.

I knew my man before I knocked at his door.—"Hold out your wrist, put out your tongue, hear what he says, and only answer what you're asked," said everybody. Well,

although my case was worthy of discussion *gradatim et seriatim* before The Medico Chirurgical Society itself, I put a tremendous restraint on myself, and enumerated symptoms of not less than five years' accumulation, in almost as many moments. Nothing could proceed smoother,—I didn't even trouble him to ask for my tongue or meet my pulse half way; he evidently regarded me with interest, asked me one or two usual questions, scribbled off a prescription, told me to use a cold bath, walk ten miles a day, and read his book.

I had dropped a word or too, while the pen was in his hand, about a tumbler of hot water I had been in the habit of taking generally after dinner, and which having sometimes afforded me temporary relief I was anxious to know if I might continue; so, I ventured, as I held the door knob in my hand, just to ask with an imploring look—"how about the hot water after dinner?" He still kept my guinea between his thumb and finger, on which I must confess I built.

"D——n!" cried he, "did *I* tell you

to wash yourself inside as well as out?"—I heard no more, went home, read his book, took his pills, cold sponged, never walked less than ten miles a day for two years, and can now, thank God, revel it with the bravest, and pay my doctor's Christmas bill, and have change, too, out of a sovereign.

As a matter of course I feel very grateful, and consider myself qualified to give a few words of passing advice to those who may be suffering, as I did, more from mismanagement than disease. It is an occasion may never offer again.—I look upon it as a duty *I ought* to perform. Those who are whole and need not a Physician, can easily pass over the next few pages to another chapter. All I would beg of them to bear in mind is, that if the advice is not to their liking, it is at all events given gratis.

And first, with regard to the salutary use of those members upon the sufficient exercise of which nature obviously intended that the establishment and continuance of perfect health should depend. This would seem to

have especial reference to that numerous and extremely interesting class of her Majesty's fair subjects—our aristocratic young ladies with sentimental aspirations, pale pensive faces, and cold toes. Yes, yes, my dear Miss Felicia, Papa's carriage is delightful, and walking very plebeian, and the roads are dirty, and the wind *is* very rude; but "health is the essence, you know, of love," and Oh! what charms have rosy cheeks, white teeth, and sparkling eyes—none of which, believe me, can the fair votary of luxury long preserve without the vulgar aid of air and exercise; even though she wore shoes to fit her, discontinued tight lacing, and swallowed dinner pills and boiling hot water without ceasing.

Oh! what a service he would be doing to mankind, who, tracing to their origin all those anomalous affections termed indigestion, afforded such a clear insight into their real character and effects, as to make those sensible of the blessings they forfeit who make not nature their chief guide and monitress, and her dictates, so palpably expressed that

none can misunderstand, their first and lasting study. The fact is, that no complaint is less understood or more difficult to treat than the affections of the stomach, termed indigestion. I shall have a thousand voices to cry me down here, I know; but true it, nevertheless, is, that but very few even of those who profess a scientific acquaintance with disease, can give a satisfactory diagnosis of these complicated disorders, much less do aught to permanently remove or relieve them. Yet, has every practitioner got his favourite specific, with which he will not only undertake to refurnish you complete, but also, for a proper consideration, to keep the works properly oiled and in order to the end of the chapter.

No doubt it is because indigestion is one of the commonest of human maladies, that it is the least studied and understood:—it is too vulgar to merit attention—it stares us in the face at every turn, all the world knows what indigestion is; every old woman can tell you that æther and hot water and peppermint candy are certain remedies for *gastrodynia*, and

a black draught is a never failing panacea. Nay, the faculty themselves have had the same set formulæ, diversified under different ingenious disguises, for ages; and before poor Sanguine finds out his mistake, he will probably have rung the changes between blue pill, and colocynth, and aloes, and myrrh, and asafætida, and bitter mixtures, and the Lord knows how many more abominations *ejusdem generis*, besides. May be, if he be of a credulous and enduring disposition, he will have to swallow a bucketful before he is made sensible that, after all, the only gainer has been his doctor, who has left him, ten to one, in a far worse state than he found him. What with morphine and mustard poultices, preparations of this, and preparations of the other, galvanic shocks, and fumigated baths, he may deem himself blessed if he escape with a remnant of endurable existence. But he has one consolation through all—that he has been treated *secundum artem*. Perhaps he is not yet without hope, and as Doctor A has failed, Doctor B may be more successful.

The same course *de novo* of propping up one day, and pulling down another, backed by encouraging examples of the miracles wrought by mesmerism and mercurial frictions; till, finding to his sorrow that Dr. B is no greater conjuror than Doctor A, it only remains for Doctor C to hit the right nail on the head. It is the last chance left him; and well for poor Sanguine had Dr. Common Sense been called in sooner. His method of treatment is very simple,—nature is his guide, her laws his study, to assist, not force her, his aim and practice:—he carefully considers her in all her aspects and operations, and endeavours to adapt his treatment, as much as possible, to her inclinations:—he observes his patient's appearance, his conversation and manner, makes himself acquainted with his usual habits of life, idiosyncrasy, temper and pursuits, and is prepared to find in the history of the past, if not of the present, full and fair reason for his every suffering. His first grand step is to insist on an immediate change, judiciously effected, from an artificial to a natural

state of life; he enjoins early hours, moderate and nutritious diet, vigorous exercise, wholesome air, temperate habits, cheerful society, and above all, the contemplation and pursuit of those objects only, as far as that can be accomplished, which give peace of mind.

Happy are they who, unable to guide themselves, are fortunate enough to have this able and excellent Physician at their elbow. However bad may be their case, however aggravated their symptoms or hopeless, seemingly, their cure; or whatever Doctor A, or Doctor B may say, my earnest advice to them is never to despair till they have consulted Doctor Common Sense. If he can do nought for them, then is their case indeed past human aid, and the sooner they settle their worldly affairs and repent of their sins the better. So, now let us take a respectful leave of the faculty, and turn our thoughts to a far pleasanter theme, the discussion of the good things on the hospitable board in the little oak parlour of the Chateau at H——.

CHAPTER VII.

I CAN say with truth that never had I more reason to congratulate myself on the salutary effects of my walking system, if high spirits and a keen appetite are any criterion, than when I took my seat at my friend St. Clair's hospitable supper table that night. Not that hunger was altogether wanted to make palatable the good things before me; no, no! although among the mountains, the palled appetite of the most fastidious epicure would have proclaimed it a feast fit for an emperor; though, why an emperor should have superior appreciatory powers of what is good to any one else, I could never understand. To a hungry man it was a feast far more de-

licious than even the repasts of the gods themselves; not from the length or quality of the bill of fare—no such thing—there was but one course, but in that single course were contained all the elements of true enjoyment for those provided with the best of all sauces—that which hunger furnishes. At the top was a dish of broiled trout—fresh and sweet as ever rose to grey palmer, which had rewarded some of the boys' piscatory skill that afternoon. Something very like an English cold Sirloin of beef stood at the other end; if it had been cooked in Park street it could not have had John Bull more unmistakably stamped upon it, even to the parsley and horse-radish; you could have almost sworn it had figured, with twenty others, on Giblett's board that morning: look at it which way you would old England stared you in the face. In the middle smoked the only evidence of our real whereabouts, in the shape of a monster bowl of *pommes de terre frites*, with the exception of a long black-necked bottle or two, which to my eye seemed to harmonize with nothing

else. Add to these, two or three side dishes of fruit, and sundry mysterious little specimens in *pâtisserie* of sweet Mistress Alice's own unsurpassed production, and you have the whole before you at a glance.

Well, down we sat, as happy and unanimous a little party as ever was assembled to do justice to the good things within our reach, evidently one and all influenced by the laudable determination to be agreeable to ourselves and each other; the consequence of which was, that what we lacked of elegance we made up by heartiness, and even the Dobsons might have looked on edified.

Notwithstanding the loss of her apricots and pet roses, not a smile could I detect missing in Alice St. Clair's sweet face, as she drew her chair close to mine, and insisted on re-arranging the moss-buds in my button-hole after the most approved "Hyde Park fashion." It was all, seemingly, to be that day—neither *à la Français*, nor *à la Belge*,—O, no! but *tout à fait à l'Anglais*. Now, I don't know anything more trying to the composure

of any man with a grain of gallantry in his composition, much less to a comely, warm-hearted, susceptible old bachelor of not certainly more than thirty-nine next birth-day, than to have two angelic blue eyes, two melting lips—red as cherries, and two pretty delicate little hands, exclusively engaged upon himself; it is enough to shake the stoicism of a philosopher. For myself, never had I felt before such misgivings of the vaunted blessings of bachelorship; and, had there not been so many witnesses, there's no knowing to what excesses my susceptibility might have prompted me; undoubtedly, nothing less could have satisfied me than, if not an offer of my hand and heart on the spot, at least a brotherly kiss of affection, after the good Catholic fashion, on each fair cheek of the lovely face that was smiling on me with such sisterly attachment. As it was, I contented myself with inwardly bidding, God bless her, and wishing her from the bottom of my heart as good a husband, when the right time came, as she most richly merited.

As for St. Clair, in spite of this fresh instance of the aggressive spirit of his neighbours, which the spoliation of the roses and apricots had just added to the list of his vexations, I don't know that I ever saw him in better spirits. For our excellent and amiable hostess, she never failed to make every thing happy over which she presided, and this says volumes. It was not that she took any pains about you — you never felt yourself a visiter — she talked but little, and seldom laughed, but there was a benevolence in her smile, an easy, lady-like propriety of manner in all she said and did, entirely free from study or effort of any kind, that every where threw a charm around her, and made you feel more at home than if she had loaded you with obligations, and overwhelmed you with never-ending assurances of her consideration. It would have given her the greatest pain, of that I am positive, to think for an instant that you were not as happy as herself; nay, I doubt very much if such a supposition ever entered her imagination; it was evident

that she thought every one *ought* to be happy; and as you could not but feel, in her society, that you ministered to her gratification as much as she did to yours, what more could you require to put you on the best terms with yourself? To listen rather than talk, and witness rather than seem to be the originator or promoter of the happiness of those around her, was her chief delight. Such natures, we may be sure, have a fountain of pure joy within themselves of which nothing can deprive them.

Of the lively bustling little Countess de Montville, or Aunt Nel as she was always called in the family, the reader has already some slight knowledge;—the more he knows of her the better he must like her—she needs no flattery — the most pleasing portrait that can be given of her is that which is truest to nature.

As I sat opposite to her that evening, she never looked handsomer nor happier to my taste. Perhaps I judged with a partial eye: certainly, she was always a great favourite of

mine, and with good reason, for who stood higher in her estimation than Mr. Alan? It would be ungracious in the extreme of me not to acknowledge it; so, there was the best understanding between us—we evidently entertained the highest opinion of each other.

There was a fascination about Aunt Nel quite irresistible; she had won you before you had been in her company an hour. There was something comfortable and endearing in her very look; it was impossible you could feel dull, far less deserted, within reach of her ever observant eye. She seemed to be the light and life of every scene in which she played a part. If she could not quite perform miracles, she had such an infinite store of resources against all emergencies at her command, as to have earned her among her friends the not inappropriate title of "The little wonder." So many shafts had she suited to all marks in her quiver—so quick was her perception, so unerring her aim—such a skilful method had she either of attack or defence, of conquest or surrender, of putting you on

stilts, or sinking you into despair, of healing wounds and probing to the quick; a flow of spirits, withal, so even, a temper so cheerful, and a heart so generous, that, prodigy or no prodigy, of this there could be no difference of opinion, that you might search the wide world round, and not find a more charming or gifted little woman than Aunt Nel; and what that wretch De Montville could have found superior in any other woman on the face of the earth, was always a marvel to me, but he was a senseless selfish brute, so, is not worth another thought.

For the rest, all was as it ought to be—the younger fry were all safe and sound in their cribs up stairs, no doubt enjoying their own happy dreams; while the seniors taking their places according to ages, after the good old fashion, we formed as jovial and interesting a little party as, I will venture to say, was ever assembled in the oak parlour of "*Le Chateau Anglais.*"

And now commenced operations in good earnest.

"What first, Alan, my boy," said St. Clair, brandishing his knife and fork, "*des truites grillés, de ros bif, ou des pommes de terre frites?*"

"*Alias,*" explained Aunt Nel "in mother tongue, Mr. Alan, fish, flesh, or fried potatoes?"

"*Des truites grillés,* by all means," said I, determined to let Ninon, the French maid, see that I hadn't been to Paris for nothing. In truth I prided myself on my accent, and that Aunt Nel knew very well.

"Yes, do try the trout, Mr. Alan," cried all the boys at once. "Fred caught the large one with the "grey palmer" you brought us from Chevalier's. They say there's a five pounder in the loch now that defies them all."

"Is there, by Jove!" exclaimed I; "we'll bag his Lordship, Fred, before eight and forty hours, or I'm no disciple of good old Isaac."

"I hope Phœbe has done them to your liking," said Mrs. St. Clair,—"I know you are a connoisseur."

They were excellent, no one knew how to dish up a trout better than Phœbe.

"The Anchovy sauce to Mr. Alan, Ninon," whispered Alice St. Clair.

"Perhaps Mr. Alan would prefer the Harvey sauce, or zest, my love," suggested her kind Mamma.

"Try Lazenby's ketchup, Alan, it beats all the others hollow with trout," recommended St. Clair.

"What, even the Sauce piquant *à la Reine des Belges?*" said I, with a dubious wink at Aunt Nel:—"this profusion is infamous, Aubrey," I continued, helping myself to some of my old friend Burgess, which by the way is, after all, the king of fish sauces;"—mountain fare this with a vengeance.

"All Mrs. St. Clair's fault," said Aubrey. A smile of such benevolence from that most amiable of women met my deprecatory glance, that for the life of me I could not find it in my heart to say another word about it.

"Oh, don't be surprised," smiled Aunt Nel, "we shall astonish you more yet; I assure you we have no notion of confining ourselves at H—— to salt *tartines* and *pecqué gouttes*."

"So it seems, by Jove!"

"They won't be contented, Alan," explained St. Clair, "with the fat of the land here, but down must come a hamper as big as a house every month from London, stuffed with all sorts of ridiculous luxuries, for which we only get laughed at; just as if there was nothing to be got for love or money at H—— but *tartines* and goat's milk."

"Highly ridiculous!" assented I. "A glass of claret, my dear Madam,"—to our worthy hostess, whose eyes were beaming with gratification at the reflection no doubt of the periodical *paniers*.

"I think I should prefer a tumbler of Guiness' stout, if you will take one, too," replied she, with irresistible sweetness.

"Heavens and earth" what next? gasped I, as Ninon frothed up my glass to the brim. "Don't you take stout, Aubrey—by George! you stand in your own light."

"Perhaps half a glass, presently, with the cheese."

"How silly! Papa" remonstrated Alice,

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"to persist in drinking those nasty cold clarets, when you know they never agree with you at supper."

"My love, do be advised," urged Mrs. St. Clair, affectionately.

"Well, well—you shall have it your own way to-night," conceded the indulgent father, evidently not irreconcilably displeased, and draining his glass with considerable gusto, "It's not so bad, eh, Alan? that I must say."

"And that noble Sirloin," said I, "well, I shouldn't wonder if that, too, came in the hamper with the Harvey sauce and Day and Martin;—faith! you may know an Englishman all over the world by his cut, it *is* a picture!"

"No—no, you are out this time," laughed Nel; *palmam qui meruit ferat*, as we used to say, you know, at Harrow, Monr. Midrolet has done wonders."

"What—mountainers, and not kill your own mutton? *Mon Dieu!*"

"You will scarcely believe," continued Nel, in spite of St. Clair's brotherly hints to

" hold her nonsensical tongue," that we had five butchers before we could make them sensible of the nature and importance of a Sirloin of beef.—It does seem incomprehensible, but so it was; they would not see it in the right light:—it was contrary to all national *boucherie* principles, a scandalous deviation from every constituted usage—this Sirloin, a piece of presumption and unwarrantable extravagance, not to be tolerated.

Were not *les grosses cuisses de bœuf*, and *les jarrets de bœuf*, and *les filets de bœuf*, and *les saucisses de bœuf* sufficient for the Chevalier Vandershott; for the Burgomaster; Monr. le Curé, and the Garde Champêtre:—and who were those Anglais, forsooth!—aliens, exiles, refugees, to be giving themselves such airs?"

My relish of this whimsical story of Aunt Nel's, would have been much greater, but that I was on tenter hooks fearing she might, with her usual consideration, begin with her *aliases* before Ninon, who had more than once complimented me on my French; but, as she left the room for a moment, I was put at my ease,

but took the opportunity to protest once and for ever against being set down thus as an ignoramus before everybody. Not that I was above a friendly hint now and then on my pronunciation, in private, although I had been in Paris once more than three months; and if there was one point more than another I was tender on, it was the purity of my accent; but such impertinences were not to be borne.

"That's right! Mr. Alan," shouted the boys, "Ninon says you speak French like a native."

"And you would all think so too," said I, not a little gratified at this side thrust at Aunt Nel, "if you had heard the compliment paid me last summer by the little *Marchande des gants* of the rue de Richlieu."

"Nothing improper, I hope," interrupted St. Clair, exchanging winks with the Countess.

"Do tell us," whispered Alice.

"Yes, do, do! Mr. Alan," entreated the boys, "never mind, Aunt Nel—she wants to know as much as any of us."

"Well, then—wanting some new silk socks of a pattern that had taken my fancy, and a pair of white kid gloves for Madame de Juifsky's *soirée*, that night, I went into a shop in the rue de Richlieu behind the counter of which, stood, sorting some *fichus*, one of the prettiest little *brunettes* I think I ever saw. Throwing into my air and manner that Parisian tone so difficult for foreigners to acquire, "*voulez-vous avoir la bonté, Mademoiselle,*" simpered I, "*de me montrer des chaussettes comme celles-ci?—et j'ai besoin, aussi, s'il vous plait, des gants de chevreau blanc.*"

Now, could anything be more intelligible than this?—I ask any one, conversant with the French tongue, if it was not, word for word, just what Madame de Genlis herself would have dictated it?

The fact is, I had been studying her manual all the morning, and considered myself perfect.

"*Plait-il?*" asked the pretty *brunette.*

"*Voulez-vous avoir la bonté—?*" repeated I, and cautiously went over the sentence again,

thinking I might, perhaps, have omitted an article, or murdered the accent.

"*S'il vous plait,*" persisted Mademoiselle, sharing more than half my perplexity.

I suppose I betrayed impatience.

"*Ah, mon Dieu!*" cried she, "*pardon—je ne comprens pas Anglais.*"

Such a general roar followed the recital of this little adventure of mine, that I was not aware at the moment that Ninon had re-entered the room during my confession. My confusion may, therefore, be conceived when I caught her face in the back ground almost convulsed with laughter, contrary to all sense of decorum and propriety:—I have hardly forgiven her for it yet. A slice of the sirloin, however, backed by some capital hot pickles, and another glass of stout, soon restored my temper to its natural pleasing serenity, and the conversation taking a general turn, nothing could exceed the hilarity and unanimity of us all. I suppose Miss Alice thought I should never forsake the pride of old England, for, seeing me cast wistful glances at it for the

third time, "Mind you keep a corner," said she, privately, "for my *petites tourtes à la Reine d'Angleterre:*—you shall taste my *boules de Londre*, to-morrow—I am famous for them."

In a moment after, one of the queen tarts was on a plate before me.

"Heavens! and what's this?" I exclaimed, as Ninon placed at my side a curious cut-glass dish on a handsome silver salver of filagree and frost-work—"Devonshire cream, as I'm living!"

"Don't spare it," said Mrs. St. Clair, looking rejoiced;—"my dear sister Lizzy, who never forgets us, says she shall send me another can in the next hamper.—You remember how we used all to enjoy Lizzy's clouted cream and currant tarts, at the old parsonage-house:—those were happy days!

"Indeed were they," responded St. Clair: "I never think of those days but I seem to wish to be once again among the happy scenes of my boyhood. You recollect the old ivy-porched church, Alan, and the snug old vicarage-house, with its flowery lawn and rustic

rambling garden; its filbert walks, and apple orchard; and the trout stream brawling away beyond the mill; and the great red park house looking down on the whole village from the hill top, like a tutelary genius; and Mat Lindsay's cottage, and the school-house, with its twenty scholars, in the hollow? I think I can see them all at this moment:—poor Mat! he deserved a better fate."

"Yes, indeed, he worked hard enough," said I, "for what he earned—thumping knowledge into thick sculls is, truly, a work of labour no less than love."

"I believe Mat professed," observed Aunt Nel, "no more than he could well perform—one would think that no one would be ignorant, if for a penny a night—Mat's terms in his prospectus, and no extras, he could insure himself the advantages of a liberal education; and, yet, how many passed his door, left invitingly half open, to squander that at the Anchor tap, which given to the schoolmaster, would never have caused a head or heart ache the next morning."

"True—true," said I, "Mat was not appreciated. No galley-slave works harder than the village pedagogue, who does his duty, and no man's merits are less perhaps acknowledged:—what with the irksome task of beating brains into bumpkin heads, the necessity of giving a full pennyworth for the penny, and the impossibility of pleasing everybody, and feeding a wife and six children on nine shillings a week, the life of such as poor Mat Lindsay is, in good sooth, no sinecure."

"I always feel for the village pedagogue," continued St. Clair,—"he is generally a distinct class of person from the beings he is placed among; his very deportment betrays him:—you may see by his serious solemn air and erect head, if sorrow have not bent it low, that he is fully aware of his own superiority; and, if others irreverently disregard his title to consideration, his true classical indifference and unperturbed demeanour, prove him, in spite of his famished face and rusty garb, what it is his chief pride to be esteemed—a philosopher."

"God help him!" echoed Mrs. St. Clair, "and were I a rich woman, I think I would take under my especial patronage, my love, all such philosophers."

"And would find a way, too," added I—"that I know, of giving them a new suit and a full meal, without wounding their pride, or diminishing from their usefulness."

"And don't you remember," said Fred, "how that sly old fox—Brimble the miller, used to run round and pull up the sluice-gates when he saw us coming over the gate with our rods; and how he swore, when Charley caught the brace of trout one day in the back water, with the red brandlings, that he'd have us all up for poaching."

"And don't you recollect," echoed Charley, "Peg Crichton's white donkey that we used to race, at sixpence an hour, against old Grumpy the carrier's blind pony?"

"I wonder," sympathized Mrs. St. Clair, looking very much as if she would like to have a good cry,—"I wonder if poor old Peg is still in the land of the living,—she could not

have been less than eighty-five when we were last at L——, and Alice took her the peppermint cordial and the *camisole* she had knitted for her:—poor Peg!—I fear she will never pick us another nosegay of sweet briar and polyanthus.'"

"Never fear that," said I, "Peg's as sound as heart of oak,—yet, I'll warrant."

"She must be ninety if she's a day," reminded Aunt Nel, "but I shouldn't wonder if Peg reaches a hundred, yet."

"All I know is," added I, "that she was as busy as a bee in her garden, when I was down there last summer for a week, trimming her crocus borders and sticking her peas, as hale and hearty as ever."

"And did you speak to her?" eagerly asked two or three voices at once,—"is her cottage as neat and clean as ever—and the crockery and brass candlesticks, and the old cuckoo-clock just where they were;—and the little oblong mahogany table under the window, and the old oak arm chair in the same place by the ingle-side, and Tom fast asleep on the hearth:

and did she bring out her brown loaf and butter, and talk of old times:—and is my little *protegée*—Fanny Melbourn, grown a great girl, too," inquired Alice;—"and the old church and parsonage—they stand, I suppose," added St. Clair, "in *statu quo*,—and the Doctor and Lizzy none the worse for wear, and as much beloved as ever:"—"and Lion, and Bell and Ponto, too—do you think *they* would know us again?" ventured the boys.

"Yes—yes," said I, "I'll be bound they would be some of the first to welcome you back again, when that joyful day comes, to the old hearthstane."

"Come—come;" interrupted Aunt Nel, suddenly rising from her chair, and making the first move to form a semi-circle round the cheerful wood fire that blazed on the hearth, and which the mountain chilliness of the autumn evenings rendered extremely agreeable, "come—come—Aubrey, my dear brother, this will never do!—Mr. Alan, I desire you will have done with your nonsensical rubbish about "old hearthstanes, and all such stuff

and nonsense; and, Fred, do you ring the bell; and Aubrey, my dear, you shall brew us a bowl of Mr. Alan's favourite whisky punch —he is getting too pathetic by half; and Fred shall read, *pro bono publico*, as we say at Harrow, his last composition of The Wild Wicked Boy, written, expressly, on the occasion of the late extraordinary conviction of Monsr. and Madame Lejuste—the immaculates, for not only milking their neighbour's cow, but stealing his pig."

"Bravo—bravo!" cried I,—"the whisky punch and Wild Wicked Boy, by all means, and after that, a story from Aunt Nel, eh, boys?—so, square your rounds; and Aubrey, my fine fellow — you shall sing us a song — whatever you do, don't be thinking of something else, and forget the whisky."

The punch, that I must say, was all that could be wished, and the first glass or two having circulated with the customary honors, "now then," said I, "for the prize poem."

"How very ridiculous of you, Aunt Nel" exclaimed Fred, blushing up to the eyes, "it's

nothing, Mr. Alan, but a bit of fun about Marc Lejuste—'The wild colt of Vaux,' as they call him—a pack of nonsense altogether, isn't it, mother?"

"Suppose, my dear, you let Mr. Alan judge for himself," encouraged that judicious parent; "but first you should explain a little who this Marc was."

"One of those incorrigible brats," anticipated Aunt Nel, "of whom no one ever predicted good; a reprobate born with a halter round his neck—the scorn and scandal of the whole neighbourhood, a wicked worthless cur; but one of those lucky dogs, nevertheless, who surviving a bad reputation, are living examples of the salutary effects of giving precedence on all occasions to your elders, and that, as nothing can be more erroneous than to suppose that the closest to church is the nearest to God, so, it is equally a mistake to conclude that the furthest from the gallows is the last to be hanged."

"*Seniores priores*, eh, Fred?" said I—and thus encouraged, that promising lad at last

drew forth, from amongst a host of other indescribable miscellanea, a folded paper very much thumbed, and added not a little to his own imperishable poetical renown as well as our amusement, by the following graphic sketch of

THE WILD WICKED BOY.

" When Marc was a boy, barely seven years old,
And loved mischief more than e'en silver or gold;
A scoundrel as ready as scoundrel could be
At robbing a hen roost, or climbing a tree;
Prigging apples and pears, chasing squirrels and cats,
Rolling head over heels, hunting rabbits and rats;
His mother she thwack'd him, and bullied and bang'd,
While father laid on till he wished they were hang'd.
But they swore with an oath that the day they should see,
When a prison or gibbet *his* portion would be.
Time passed:—scarce a cat round the country was left,
Each doting old maid of her pet was bereft;
Not a spider in safety its cobweb could weave,
Not a rabbit nor rat had a moment's reprieve;
Not a jackass in comfort his meal could enjoy,
All the village waged war with the Wild Wicked Boy.
In vain mother bang'd, father flourish'd the stick,
In vain e'en the priest gave him o'er to old Nick;

Vain alike cakes and coaxing or cane to employ,
What could save from the deuce such a Wild Wicked Boy?
Time pass'd—and the youth in due season began
To wax older and wiser, and in time grew a man;
Not a pleasanter fellow, nor better, nor one
Who has turn'd out, they say, a more dutiful son,
A worthier neighbour or trustier friend;—
A proof at the worst how things often will mend,
How many are *sent* prematurely to pot,—
'Tis a long lane indeed that no turning has got;
How few would escape if the hangman might claim
For his own, every dog that had got a queer name.
They swore he'd be hang'd, better luck though for him,
Marc has cheated old Nick, and is sound wind and limb;
And the best of the joke is, and who would have thought it?
The Wild Boy is safe, and the old ones have caught it;
As a lesson to some folks who love to talk big,—
T'other day they were haul'd up for stealing a pig;
Besides milking the cow of the widow O'Rourke,
They could not be content without prigging her pork;
And now at the galleys have gone to enjoy
Change of climate instead of their Wild Wicked Boy."

MORAL.

"Proving how many a good dog with a bad name is prematurely condemned, contrary to all sense of justice and humanity; and how it sometimes happens that the devoted child disappoints his friends, and declines the gallows just in time to make room for his respected parents."

Scarcely had Fred concluded this elegant composition, infinitely to his credit, and I was proving, to the satisfaction of every one, that much worse things had been written by many of our Poets laureate, when a scream was heard from without—so loud and piercing, as to cause us all to start simultaneously from our chairs. St. Clair, seizing the poker, rushed out at the door in the direction from whence the sounds proceeded; while I, leaving the ladies—pale as sheets with apprehension, to the guardianship of the boys, snatched up the tongs, and with reckless impetuosity followed my friend, determined, if necessary, to shed the last drop of my blood in our mutual defence.

What share the whisky punch might have had in this doughty resolution, as Aunt Nel afterwards had the ingratitude to hint, the reader is at perfect liberty to form his own opinion;—he will learn the important results to which it led in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE evening had closed in dark and stormy. The wind which had been blowing from the south west during the afternoon—portending a boisterous night, now swept through the corridors of the old Chateau, whistling and moaning most piteously. Large masses of black threatening clouds rode along as fast as they could scud over the face of the heavens, as if flying from some pursuing foe; sometimes wholly obscuring in their passage what little light the moon, then in her second quarter, seemed struggling to afford. The night air from the mountain blew raw and chill after the cheerful cozy blaze of the wood fire, and made the teeth almost chatter in my head:—

it was just the night suited for some deed of darkness; but there was no time for thinking about it; poker in hand, St. Clair was already at the extremity of the broad walk or drive, as we call it in England, and hastening towards some object extended, as I now perceived, across the path. In a moment I was at his side, assisting him to raise up and support as fast as we could into the house the apparently lifeless form of a woman.

"My God!" ejaculated St. Clair, as the light of the moon for an instant fell on the livid face of our burden,—"it is Phœbe, they have murdered her."

"What—what?" cried I, horror struck and feeling my hair stand on end,—"murdered her, who—who—Aubrey, for what—for what?"

Support her head, for God's sake, exclaimed St. Clair; the villains—the miscreants!—they said they would do for her.—I'll tell you all about it by and bye,—poor Phœbe!"

By this time we had reached the house, and were laying her, as we all thought dead, on a couch in the ante-room, amidst a scene of

general horror and amazement impossible to depict, when, "Hark!"—exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, who was kneeling by her side in an agony of terror and suspense,—"she breathes, she breathes!—why don't Doctor Rodolph come!"—whereupon, that kind hearted and experienced lady lost not a moment in making the most of the interval that must elapse before it was possible that the worthy Doctor could, with the utmost expedition, make his appearance. Every conceivable means to raise the dead to life was had recourse to, and as many restorative specifics from the far famed medicine chest brought into operation as might have awakened Lazarus himself:—nothing was left undone that could be done. We were in the midst of it, when, to our unspeakable relief, in bustled the little Doctor with his green spectacles and scarlet umbrella, almost breathless with the haste he had made. No words can express our admiration at this evident mark of attention on the part of the Doctor—one feels anything of the sort so sensibly far away from home. It

was not the first time by many he had been a welcome visiter at the Chateau, for, although there were few cases of the ordinary routine that did not come within the range of our skilful hostess' curative powers, still, it now and then happened that an obstinate symptom defied all her endeavours, and, then, no one could deal with it better than Francois Rodolph. He was a general favorite; and professing, and feeling, too, that I verily believe, a sincere regard for the English, in whose *bel pays de liberté*—as he often called it, he had passed some years during his youth—not the least happy of his life, he was always regarded by the St. Clairs rather in the light of an agreeable friend and neighbour than any thing else.

Little Rodolph, as we called him, was a native of Germany; but having imprudently mixed himself up a great deal too much in some of the political agitations of his country, during the party struggles of 18—, he drew upon himself the resentment of the government—was compelled to fly and take

shelter from the storm in Belgium. Here, by dint not less of considerable professional skill than diligence and unwearied courtesy—a *sine quâ non* for success with the Belgians, he soon made friends, and, by a fortunate hit or two, ultimately acquired considerable distinction in the province of Liége.

As it is always pleasant to trace to their causes the advancement and prosperity of our fellow creatures in this life of doubtful issues, and, as from old associations, I entertain unusual respect for the little doctor, I shall, hereafter, revert to "the fortunate hit," as it may well be called, by which he, amusingly enough, rose seemingly to fame and fortune. At present we cannot better view him than in the discharge of his professional duties by the side of poor Phœbe, whom indeed we have already left too long, considering her critical, but we trust, not hopeless state.

"O, my dear Dr. Rodolph!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair,—"I am so glad you are come. "Mr. St. Clair has told you all—poor Phœbe! as kind and harmless as a lamb, too:—what

is to be done? We have tried every thing—brandy and water, aromatic ammonia, harts-horn, lavender drops, æther, Godfrey's cordial, cardamoms, peppermint, camphor julep, hot flannels, and keys, and every thing else we could think of;—but, look at her, poor thing!—what is to be done?"

"Nothing more at present, my dear madam," replied the doctor, kindly;—"there—there," said he, adjusting her head and applying some pungent substance, which he took from his waistcoat pocket, to her nose, "she will be better presently."

The doctor's words fell like balm on our senses—we seemed suddenly to have a great load removed from our hearts—we all breathed afresh; and now followed a repetition, for the twentieth time, of all the harrowing circumstances of the case—how, according to invariable custom, Phœbe had no doubt gone to lock the lodge gates, and see all was right and tight for the night; and how, returning to the house, no doubt she was waylaid, and would have been murdered but for her cries

that brought us just in time to her assistance.

Aunt Nel persisted in inclining to the belief, that, being rather of a timid turn, she had fancied herself in peril from some pilfering vagabond who was after the pears and apples; but I wouldn't listen to any thing of the kind.—Had we not sallied forth armed with poker and tongs, to cope with assassins and robbers, and were we to be told that all our heroism and bravery had been directed against a pack of petty larcenists?

"The mischievous varlets!" said the doctor; "it's as plain as a pike-staff—Phœbe can't keep her tongue still,—her Protestant zeal has reached Monr. le Curé's ears;—it's well for her 'tis no worse."

At this moment, Phœbe, fetching a deep-drawn sigh, raised herself up, rubbed her eyes, stared for a moment around her as if stupified, and the recollection of the terrible scene she had just witnessed flashing anew across her mind, down she sank again, and but for the doctor's fortunate presence, there is no

knowing, to say nothing of the lamentable waste of precious medicaments that must have ensued, what would have been the consequence. At length, the power of utterance arriving with returning consciousness, "The ghost—the ghost," were her first words. "O, Doctor Rodolph, the ghost—the ghost!" and giving way to the emotion that almost choked her, she burst into a torrent of tears.

"Let her alone," interposed St. Clair, as I would have put in a word of comfort,—"a good cry will do her more good than all the drugs in Apothecaries' Hall;—we shall have a full, true, and particular account all in good time, depend on't."

Nature having relieved herself through that best and safest of affliction's safety valves—a copious flood of tears, soon regained its balance, and now all was explained and accounted for.

It was evident, as the doctor had said, that Phœbe had brought it all on herself, by her non-observance of that primary and most essential rule to be regarded by Protestants in

a Catholic country—never, under any circumstances, to interfere in matters of religion with persons holding a different creed from their own. It appeared that Phœbe, with indiscreet zeal for her own cause, had on several occasions endeavoured to convert to the true faith a young girl, the daughter of an *ouvrier* living in the village, whom, out of charity, Mrs. St. Clair occasionally employed about the house and gardens; nay, had gone so far, in addition to other pretty significant evidences of her inappreciation of Monr. le Curé's infallibility, no less than the Virgin's mediatorial indispensability, as to designate as something like a gross absurdity, God forgive her!—her *protegée*'s religious horror of almost the sight of animal fat on a fast-day, whereas, she might devour butter by handfuls. Phœbe could not stomach this:—it is unnecessary to repeat the arguments she employed, or the temptations she held out—the upshot was—that she had the exquisite gratification to see her young proselyte sit down, one Friday, and eat a plentiful meal of

roast leg of mutton. But such sin could not go long unpunished—it brought its own condemnation. Whether so unblest a meal would not digest, or lay a load on the conscience too heavy to be borne, must be a matter of conjecture. Somehow, the affair got wind—the artful young slut made a full confession, no doubt laid all the crime at Phœbe's door; and well for her indeed it was that she had escaped from the wrath of Monr. le Curé with nothing worse than a fainting fit, and a lesson which it is to be hoped will last her for life.

The circumstances of the case altogether, however, as soon as she had sufficiently recovered to make them fully understood, were of a nature to excite considerable anxiety in the minds of us all, and to suggest the necessity of an immediate search being made over the premises. So, leaving the doctor to keep guard in our absence, and arming ourselves this time with a good tough stick a-piece, out we sallied again; treading as softly as possible, and using every other precaution to es-

cape observation; in the hope, if the enemy were still lurking about, to take him by surprise. The night was getting darker and darker every moment; it was impossible to distinguish any object many yards off: the wind blew a hurricane, and sweeping past us in violent gusts, drove the shower that now fell pretty fast and thick into our teeth; but, nothing daunted, on we went reconnoitering —now creeping almost on all fours—now concealing ourselves, as any suspicious noise caught our ear, behind the trees and bushes, till, arriving nearly at the end of the holly walk, a tall white figure, like that of a man in a blouse and night-cap, was distinctly perceptible crouching among the shrubs.

"By heaven! there they are," whispered St. Clair,—now we shall have them;" and rushing forward, he had reached within ten yards of the spot where the figure stood, when his ghostship — making a desperate bolt, dashed through the hedge that separated us from the road, and disappeared.

"Villain!" cried St. Clair, "you shall not

escape me thus," and following the leader, he somehow cleared the fence.

"*Gamin—canaille!*" thundered I, "we'll teach you to play the ghost," and, taking a leap which astonished myself, over the hedge I went sure enough; but my impetuosity had nearly cost me a broken neck, for, unconscious of the ditch on the other side, down I rolled head over heels, till I lay fairly floored amongst the slough and brambles at the bottom.

Further pursuit was useless. But for this unlucky mishap of mine, I havn't a doubt but that St. Clair, whose blood was up, would have taught his ghostship such a lesson as he would have carried with him to his grave. For myself, I had had a sickener; so, there was nothing for it but to regain my legs, adjust my ruffled plumes, and make up my mind to bear, with the best grace I might, Aunt Nel's hearty laugh, which I well knew was in store for me for the remainder of my days.

"Never mind her, Alan," condoled St.

Clair, " I never saw such a leap as your's at a quick set before, in my life."

It was of no use—I thought Aunt Nel would have died with laughing; but, as I laughed myself, too, as much as any of them, she was forced at last to acknowledge that I was a hero in every sense of the word.

" Well," said the Doctor, drawing his chair towards the fire—" I hope this will be a warning to Phœbe, to keep her tongue in her mouth; she don't know as much of these things as I do; and now, if you are all in the humour for a story, this night's adventure brings to my recollection a little tale that came to my knowledge some years ago when I was travelling in France, of the truth of which I was assured, and than which nothing can more terribly prove the extent to which vengeful bigotry will carry its malignity."

Nothing could possibly be more in harmony with all our wishes than a tale of horrors that night;—every thing conspired to make it peculiarly *apropós;*—the storm raged without, the wind had risen to a fearful height, and

roared in tremendous fury round the old building, while the rain, beating with increased violence against the many windows with which every chamber of the Chateau was furnished, made us bless ourselves with the thought that we were safe and snug out of all harm's way:—so, throwing some fresh logs on the hearth, and replenishing our glasses with a new brewage of the whisky punch, we awaited in anxious expectation the little Doctor's story, which ran, as well as I can recollect, nearly as follows.

"Some years ago, when it was a much easier matter than it is, thank God! in the present more enlightened times, or ever will be again, for priestly villany and imposture to go undetected beneath the sacerdotal garb; when craft and ingenuity and pharisaical self assurance had a far better chance of earning distinction, than the most profound learning or the sincerest piety; when the blindest bigotry, the grossest ignorance, and the fiercest intolerance were accounted the best evidence of priestly qualification, frequently raising men

higher in the estimation of their neighbours than the greatest virtues or the noblest zeal; when characters—the most ill-informed and unprincipled, had the care of their fellow-creatures' souls and the custody of their consciences; when it was only to be a clever compound of the fool and knave, the martyr and the jesuit, the poor man's friend and parasite, to insure, seemingly, universal adulation and preferment;—there lived in one of the western *fauxbourgs* of Paris, a sharp, black curly headed, good looking young man named Hugo Baptiste, as perfect a specimen of incorrigible idleness, depravity and self-conceit, as even the most dissolute capital in the world ever produced.

Hugo had early given evidence of considerable aptitude for those qualifications that mark their possessor out, either for one extreme or the other, for certain distinction or infallible disgrace—it was as clear as noon day that he would either rise to greatness or the gallows. Not that he owed any knowledge he could boast of, to education; for, be-

sides the little he had picked up under the good *maitre d' école* of the *département* in which his parents, during his boyhood, resided, not much of good was it that he knew; but he was not deficient in natural ability—what he wanted of knowledge he abundantly made up by cunning, and having the advantage of a good address, a plausible tongue, and, when it suited his purpose to put it on, a very engaging manner, added to a face and figure unusually prepossessing, somehow, in spite of his good for nothing life and habits, Hugo Baptiste was a general favourite, and among the women, in particular, a never failing card.

Time continued its flight with Hugo, as it does with many others, bringing its usual harvests of bitter fruits at best. Of these he seemed determined to take his fill. He had reached the age of nearly thirty before he turned his mind seriously to any fixed pursuit. How he got on at all was the wonder:—his parents were of the poorest, and barely able to support themselves; still, Hugo never went without his dinner, nor wanted a gay Sunday

suit to ruffle it with the bravest on parade; for dress he would, and dance and sing, if he had to live six days out of every seven on leek soup. At last it became every day more necessary to strike out a path for himself, if he would keep any flesh on his bones or a decent coat on his back. Various and conflicting, doubtless, were the struggles between pride and poverty, indolence and necessity—till, attracting the attention of Madame Babet Leroux, a pious old lady of St. Germain, he was admitted into her service as a sort of clerk and collector in a large *magazin des draps*, of which she was proprietress in the *quartier de* ———.

Although this was a situation by no means after Baptiste's own heart, and one at which his pride kicked not a little, still it was better than nothing. There was plenty to eat and drink; he heard no more the reproaches of his friends, or the taunts of his companions—he could hold up his head with the best of them; and though the wages he received were at first but inconsiderable—they were paid regularly, and would enable him to cut as fine

a figure as ever, on Sundays, at his favourite *Café* and *ducasse*. Well for Hugo if he had known when he was well off,—but, as usual, the force of habit prevailed,—the domino box was irresistible.—It was long past midnight when he returned one night from his *Café*, and then in a state by no means befitting the well regulated establishment of so strict and pious a lady as Madame Babet Leroux. Such flagrant irregularities—such disgraceful excesses could not be overlooked ;—his immediate dismissal was the consequence, and the wide world was again open to Hugo Baptiste.

But he was not to be thus cast off with impunity. Having resolved, during a night of deep cogitation, to go seek his fortune far from the scenes in which he had too long been playing a most inglorious part, and feeling, as may be easily conceived, that the old adage of a man's not being " a prophet in his own country," was especially applicable to himself; he lost no time in possessing himself, at the various tradespeople of his mistress, of

such things as he most stood in need of to set him out comfortably on his new expedition; and having received what little money was due to him—listened with becoming attention to a long lecture from the old lady on the perils of idleness and intemperance, and taken a hasty farewell of his parents and friends, he was soon far away from Paris, journeying he hardly knew whither, or with what precise object.

For some time he wandered about from place to place, picking up a living as he best could—sometimes in great straits, at others on the very stilts of joy and expectation: but still through all, by the exceeding comeliness of his looks and the blandness of his tongue making friends and interest wherever he went. At length, after many ups and downs, he had the good fortune to be mentioned in terms of strong recommendation to the Curé of the little town in which he was staying—a good-natured, unsuspicious, simple-minded creature; a bright exception to the generality of his professional brethren in those days—a

sincere disciple—a kind pastor—meek-spirited, humble-minded: a devout christian, and an honest man. So successfully did Hugo play his part—so strongly was the Curé impressed with a favourable opinion of his piety and understanding, that he admitted him under his roof as a sort of factotum and assistant in his school.

For a time nothing could be more blameless or praiseworthy than his conduct, and considerable was the knowledge he picked up, no less than the improvement visible in his personal appearance, under the genial auspices of his new patron; but alas! such a peaceful, plodding, hum-drum life, as he irreverently called the best days he ever led in his life, was not likely to suit a spirit like Baptiste's very long:—the fact is, he had a master-stroke for preferment in view, which if he could succeed in carrying out, would be an achievement worthy his ingenuity, and which kept him in a state of perpetual restlessness and suspence. Doubling his assiduity to his patron, his first step was to lay

his hands on every thing he could appropriate to his own use, of his master's, without exciting his suspicions, by which he collected together a pretty good store against the time of need; his next, to talk him over to the belief that he had rich friends in Paris, through whose influence he had no doubt he could procure him a stall in the cathedral, or some other equally eligible appointment, wherein, the sphere of his Christian usefulness would be so much greater than in a dull country town, where it was impossible his talents and merits could ever be appreciated. To such an extent did he work on the good man's feelings, as at last to induce him to undertake a journey to Paris, for the express purpose of giving personal weight to his endeavours in his behalf. Scarcely had he departed, and left the coast clear, when Baptiste, gaining access, by means of a false key, to a drawer of the bureau in which he knew he kept his private papers, abstracted therefrom the Curé's certificate of priesthood, with which, and the spoils he had gathered together, after writing a pathetic letter to his benefactor, ex-

pressing his unutterable regret at being compelled, by the sudden death of a near and beloved relative who had made him his heir, to quit his service perhaps for ever, and having duly committed him to the care of the blessed Virgin and St. Nicholas, and pointed out the department of La Vendée as his ultimate destination, he decamped with all possible expedition to Lyons.

In the meanwhile, the Curé, unable, on his arrival in Paris for the first time in his life, and no more acquainted with the world's ways than a child, to discover any such persons as he was in search of, to conduct him into his prebendal stall, concluded, in the simplicity of his heart, that Hugo must either have mistaken their address, or that they had quitted the capital; and soon getting weary of his fruitless quest, and the expenses of a city life, he retraced his steps without a sigh towards his home, never doubting for one moment the zeal or integrity of his friend, and little dreaming for many a long day of the trick that had been played him.

Meanwhile, having domiciled himself se-

curely in Lyons, Baptiste's first care was, with the assistance of some detersive chemical fluid of bleaching potency, to cause the name of Louis Mathelon to disappear from the Curé's certificate, and his own to figure in its stead. This done to his satisfaction, and having assumed to perfection the character and qualifications of the priesthood—an easy matter to one so apt at all arts and dissimulations as Baptiste, he presented himself before the Bishop, and so struck was his Eminence with his conversation and deportment, that after repeated interviews, at each of which he established himself still more securely in his Grace's good opinion, he received the appointment of a Curé, in the outskirts of the city. This may seem incredible, but such was actually the case; and so well did the new Curé act his part, so strictly did he perform the duties of his holy office, so completely did he ingratiate himself into every one's favour, that soon no one else was heard of—no confessor in such repute as the Abbé Baptiste:—with the men he was a paragon of

priestly excellence — with the women, little short of a divinity.

Things now went on prosperously enough for some time, although, no doubt the perpetual dread of detection which, in spite of every precaution, it was impossible wholly to drive away from his thoughts, was a thorn in his side that sadly intruded through his bed of roses. To the eye of the world nothing could be more serene and placid than the whole tenor of the Abbé Baptiste's life and conversation—nothing purer than his doctrine—nothing more perfect than his practice. But the moment of temptation, too strong to be resisted, was again at hand, and it is only in such critical moments as these that the true value of either doctrine or practice is fairly put to the test. Baptiste's avaricious covetousness had often been the downfall of his brightest projects—and was destined again to cast him forth—a homeless fugitive.

A wealthy old miser of his parish—well known and often visited by Baptiste, being at the point of death, sent for him to admi-

nister the last sacrament, and absolve him of his sins. He hastened to his bed-side, knelt by the dying man, muttered his prayers, exhorted him to repentance and a full confession of his misdeeds; talked to him of heaven and hell, and of the indispensable necessity of making atonement for his transgressions—by a munificent donation to the church, which was ever an indulgent parent, and would extend her mercies to all such as by their good deeds deserved them. Having at length worked on the expiring sinner's feelings sufficiently, and contrived to get his relations out of the way, he continued to exhort, and preach and pray to him, till he fell asleep, when, making search, he discovered, concealed in a hole behind some bricks and rubbish up the chimney—a bag of gold, which having seized and secreted about his person, he took a tender and affectionate leave of the afflicted family, and returned home.

The heir, disappointed of his expected treasure, was almost beside himself with rage and vexation:—nothing was to be found. "Per-

haps the old miser had buried his wealth in his garden," suggested Baptiste; so, that which had so lately been one of the most luxuriant little *parterres*, round Lyons, was soon a shrubless, flowerless fallow field to behold. The old house was ransacked and almost levelled with the dust; even the Abbé Baptiste looked on and sympathized, but to no effect:—either old Pierre Lotte's money bags had been carried off by some one acquainted with their whereabouts, or he had cheated them all with visions of his golden heaps—to insure the continuation of their devoted attachment to his person and interest to the end of the chapter.

At length, from his expensive mode of life (for Baptiste could never resist temptation, some surprise began to be expressed—as to how the Abbé obtained the means to surround himself with so many indulgences.—Surmises by degrees assumed the shape of suspicions;—to these succeeded murmurs, which soon reaching his ears, together with an intimation of certain investigations on foot

materially involving his own credit and comfort, he determined to spare his friends any further pains on his account—packed up his valise, and in less than twelve hours had bid an eternal farewell to Lyons; and, steering his course towards a flourishing little town in the department of the Moselle, it was not long before he was snugly settled again in another benefice, which, although not so lucrative as the last, was far less laborious, and free from those objections, of especial import in his own peculiar position, inseparable from public ministration in a great city.

Hugo Baptiste now thought himself at rest: he had every thing that moderate heart could desire—health—a competence, if he would make it so—the universal adoration of his neighbours, and—no! not the approval of his own conscience:—that first and chief cause, independent of all others, of true happiness, he had ever been a stranger to; he could, therefore, hardly be supposed to feel acutely the want of that, of the possession of which he had never known the joy. Conscience is

a commodity, with such as Hugo Baptiste, that, although never wholly to be silenced, can be so effectually muffled as hardly to disturb, much less cause any great alarm.—Hugo's creed was like most men's who have so far deadened its appeals as never to ask its advice till it is too late to profit by admonition; he scouted it as a coward—regarded failure as the chief sin—success, the best proof of merit, and nothing criminal that was secret. So, could he but remain unknown—could he but pursue the course self-interest had marked out—would success but smile on his endeavours, no matter by what foul motives prompted, or fouler means sustained, he was safe in his own estimation; and being safe—safe from the detection of his fellow-man—the only fear that ever haunted him, and that had in it more dread than the flames of hell themselves—he was content, in the self-congratulations of present security, to forget not only the terrible warnings of the past, but even to set at nought every prudential consideration for the future.

Hugo Baptiste, in the flattering self-congratulation that he was unknown, and that his plans prospered, was happy—happy as it was possible that successful villany could make him. Little dreamed he that the avenger was so near at hand; that, at the very moment when he was hugging himself in the fond belief of his impunity, the dread fiat had gone forth—that there were those among his nearest neighbours—least known to him, a word from whose mouths would plunge him from the highest pinnacle of his ambition into the lowest depths of ruin and disgrace.

Some things that, if related in the course of narrative, have the most fictitious and improbable appearance, are, nevertheless, as strictly in accordance with truth and every day experience, as the most ordinary events of life, and are often to be regarded, not as extraordinary casualties merely, but rather as specially appointed instances of divine ordinance, for some wise and righteous end. Nothing happens—of that we may rest assured, however startling or unaccountable to

man's perceptions—but has its origin and issue in divine appointment, of the wisdom and efficacy of which, it is impossible for human intelligence to form even a conception.

These are not the days of miracles such as were wrought in our forefathers' times; but no less — though in other forms, are miracles of daily occurrence every hour that we live—miracles of love, and mercy, and interposition, and retribution,—wonders beyond man's utmost powers of comprehension to appreciate, and that will never cease, so long as vice exists, and the cause of virtue has to be avenged.

It was but a few weeks after Hugo Baptiste's appointment to his new curacy, that an English widow lady, with her only daughter, after taking a tour through nearly the whole of France and Belgium, came to reside in the neighbourhood; induced by the representations of some friends who had taken up their abode there, that her income would go so much farther, with the object she had in view—the completion of her daughter's edu-

cation under competent professors, than in the French or Belgian capital.

It so happened, singularly enough, that Madame Vallerton was at Lyons during the zenith of Baptiste's popularity, and hearing him spoken of in high terms of praise, she went to see him preach. Hugo's features were marked and striking, and if his discourse made no very permanent impression on her mind, there was that in the man's appearance and manner, that, once closely observed, was not easily to be forgotten. But, never having seen him since, or hardly given him a thought, and the name of Baptiste being so common throughout France, it never for a moment occurred to her, when the fame of the new Curé reached her ears, that it was one and the same Hugo Baptiste, whose divine ministration had caused such a sensation at Lyons, and of whose sudden disappearance so many contradictory rumours had gone about.

Attached to Madame Vallerton's establishment was a young girl of extraordinary per-

sonal charms, by all accounts, whom she had brought with her from Brussels, as a sort of *bonne* and *fille de chambre*—one of the prettiest *grisettes* eye ever beheld; so much so, as to be a constant cause of solicitude to Madame Vallerton, from the obtrusive attention she excited wherever she went. There was something in the expression of Marion's face irresistible—a fascination in her smile, indescribable—she riveted you—you could not keep your gaze off her. Her eyes, large and lustrous, were of the darkest nut brown, as was her hair, which, worn in plain close short bands round her cheek, gave to her complexion a hue sometimes of almost supernatural transparency:—her nose would have been perfection but for the slightest possible inclination upward, which, however, if not in strict keeping with the general classical contour of her other features, perhaps rather added to, than diminished from their attractions:—but the chief charm of all was in her mouth:—there was a witching sweetness in that mouth, and smooth oval chin, that no words can describe

nor pencil paint—a captivation that must be seen, or rather felt, to be understood; nor was the symmetry or gracefulness of Marion's figure inferior to her other charms, and a casual observer would have declared, to judge from her general conversation and deportment, that she was no less good than beautiful.

But Marion's was not the beauty of an angel, either bodily or mentally; but rather of a siren, who lures you, whether you will or not, within her wiles. There was a something in the fascination of her smile, that, while it won you, and made dizzy the brain, sent no thrill of pleasure to the heart: you saw that if she could fondly, madly love, as fiercely and fearfully could she also hate—you felt that it were far safer for you to have Marion for your friend than enemy, and better still if you had never gazed upon her twice.

And Marion knew her power.

Hitherto, nothing could have been more irreproachable than her conduct, nor kinder

than her attentions, since she had been in Madame Vallerton's service; and although the ladies could never bring themselves to be quite at their ease with her, they had never had the slightest reason to question her fidelity, or remind her of her duties. They had yet to learn—that it is one thing to secure the mercenary services of a foreign domestic, another—to keep her honest. Do what you will for the majority of them—take them from poverty and wretchedness, feed and clothe them, instruct them, establish them in comfort and good repute, tend them in sickness, reward them for well doing, admit them to all the privileges of members of your own family—and be assured, directly their own interest or convenience is in the slightest degree at stake, they will not only forsake you in a moment, but, if it suit their purpose, repay all your kindnesses to them with the blackest perfidy and ingratitude.

Amongst other fond delusions under which Madame Vallerton laboured, with regard to Marion, in whom she took, as did likewise

Miss Vallerton, peculiar interest, the most lamentable was the fallacious hope she indulged, that, as the girl had often expressed an apparent anxiety to be instructed in the articles of the Protestant faith, some day she might be brought into the bosom of our church. Nothing could have been more erroneous than such an idea, nothing more ill judged than the attempts to which it gave rise, or more terrible than their results.

Thrown off her guard by her pupil's seeming earnestness in the cause, Madame Vallerton and her daughter lost no opportunity to prosecute, by every means in their power, the favourite object they had in view. This could only be done by undermining cautiously, but steadily and determinedly—the foundation on which she had been taught, from her cradle, to build all her hopes and best affections. To say such zeal was indiscreet, is not enough—'twas improper—'twas perilous in the extreme!—but to what foolish, fatal lengths will not such zeal, as it is called, lead its votaries? Marion saw it all, but per-

ceiving, too, the influence she acquired over her employers by seeming to be a willing listener, she lent a ready ear, while in her heart she was all the while treasuring up the seeds of unextinguishable hatred and revenge.

One thought only seemed uppermost in Madame Vallerton's mind—to make a convert:—what joy, what triumph would that be! no sacrifice could be too great for the attainment of so precious, so blessed an end. And nothing could be more radiant with promise than the great and good work she had undertaken:—so satisfactory was the advance she had made, indeed, that sending for her *protegée*, she presented her with an elegantly bound silver clasped French and English bible, as a token of her appreciation of her services, and her affectionate esteem and solicitude for her happiness and welfare.

With tears of well feigned joy and gratitude did Marion receive this fresh insult to her pride, and intended enemy to her peace. It was a proud moment for Madame Vallerton. From that instant she never doubted but that

the axe was not only laid at the tree's root, but had already reached its core, and that, ere long, the whole mighty fabric of unprofitableness, giving way to the irresistible force of the mighty power opposed to it, would totter till it fell.

It was just at this juncture that the fame of the new Curé, Monr. Baptiste, began to be the subject of universal conversation; his comeliness and ability the theme of every tongue. As usual, his gracefulness and good deeds went before him like a trumpet, proclaiming his title to universal homage and adulation. Nothing soon was thought or talked of but the pious, affable and handsome Hugo Baptiste;—even, Marion the convert, fortified, as one would have thought, against all temptations by the silver clasped talisman in her possession, could not subdue a hankering wish to join the happy flock guided and guarded over by such a shepherd:—"There could be no harm in just seeing whether he was as handsome and eloquent as they made him out—she would go, just for once, and judge for herself."

She went,—and from that hour a change deep and dark and impenetrable came over Marion's spirit. She was an altered being; at least to Madame Vallerton's eye she seemed so, who, attributing the gloom that so suddenly had overspread her pupil's mind to any but the right cause, renewed with redoubled perseverance her expositions and exhortations:—all was alike useless—it was evident that some power of darkness had got possession of her thoughts, and kept her enthralled beneath its accursed sway: but, *nil desperandum*—truth must at last prevail, and no pains or patience should be spared to make its cause triumphant. Meanwhile, Marion—unknown to her mistress, was making the best reparation in her power for her apostacy, by throwing herself and all her cares into the tender keeping of that good shepherd, whose duty no less than delight it was to recall the stray lamb within his fold. Not a day passed but Marion and Hugo Baptiste met, and prayed, and praised God together—for nothing more than that he had been the appointed minister

to save so precious a soul from the yawning gulf prepared for its destruction.

What soul but would yearn with tenderest emotion towards the minister of its salvation? What heart must that minister have—certainly not the heart of a Hugo Baptiste, that could resist the grateful sacrifice offered on the altar of love and adoration, by the sweet soul of his own adoption?

Louder and louder grew the praises of the Curé Baptiste, till, reaching Madame Vallerton, she took her seat one day with her daughter in the midst of his congregation, to hear him preach. What was their surprise, to see the identical face and figure that had interested them so much in Lyons, ascend the pulpit? There could be no mistaking the man; those features, once seen could never be forgotten;—it was the self same Hugo Baptiste, who, after being all but idolized by his flock, had suddenly deserted them, under circumstances of so much strange scandal and suspicion.

Full of it, as may be supposed; on their re-

turn home, they lost no time in making known to Marion the discovery they had made.

A cloud, black as night, fell over the countenance of the young catholic, as she listened to the fatal disclosure; which Madame Vallerton ascribed to the mortification she must naturally feel at a circumstance so materially affecting the character of a minister of her own church, especially a man so generally esteemed and respected as Monr. le Curé Baptiste; but she said not a word, and the subject passing off for the time, she went, seemingly unconcerned, about her duties as usual.

That night, Marion might have been seen (having obtained leave of absence to visit a sick friend) wrapped in a long black cloth cloak and hood, and with a silk handkerchief tied neatly over her head, as the air was cold and raw, making her way through the streets in the direction of the *rue de Boiteux;* till, arriving at a tall, gaunt, dingy looking edifice close to the *Pont d'Argent,* she gazed wistfully around her for a moment; hastily ascended

the steps, knocked,—was admitted, and the door closed after her, and all still and undisturbed as before, before you could have counted twenty. It was not Marion's first visit to that house by many, but never before had she met the gracious smile of her confessor with so downcast and disturbed a look.

"What means this sadness on my sweet Marion's brow, to night," inquired Hugo, fondly, and pressing affectionately the hand that was held out to him,—"can aught have happened amiss since we last met? *Ah, Mon Dieu!* I see, I see—that book, that fearful, fatal book!—nay! it shall never cause thee trouble more, sweet innocent;"—saying which, he thrust into a pocket beneath his dress the bible, which, on her knees and with streaming eyes, Marion placed in his hands. Nay, rise, rise,"—continued Baptiste, kissing her cold forehead;—"'tis past. Well and nobly hast thou made reparation, Marion:—thy sin, believe me, is blotted out—thy pardon obtained: hast thou aught else to tell me, Marion?"

For some moments the trembling girl stood

as if spell-bound, and gazing with a look of unutterable woe on the face of her companion. "Yes, Hugo Baptiste," faltered she at length, her voice almost stifled with emotion,—"to-night we part for ever!—nay, hear me—you are betrayed—lost—lost!—knew you not Madame Vallerton—at—Lyons?"

"Ah—fiends!"—gasped Hugo, thrown off his guard, and turning pale as ashes; "what of Lyons,—what, I say, of thy mistress, Marion, speak—speak!—I command thee—trifle not with me, as thou would'st have my blessing."

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Deep and dark was the conference that now ensued between Marion and Hugo Baptiste, and late was it before the good Curé laid his head that night upon his sleepless pillow. The following evening was Marion again a welcome visiter in the *rue de Boiteux*. What was the nature of their secret councils, none but the Eye from which no thoughts are hidden, can ever know; but the horrible catastrophe that fell, like a desolating blight immediately after, over the town of C———

affords but too sure a clue to the whole fearful mystery.—In less than forty hours after Marion's last interview with her confessor,—Madame Vallerton and her daughter were no more.

When Marion went, according to her usual custom, to call them and receive their orders for the morning, what must have been her emotions to find mother and child both dead and cold, and locked in each other's arms? and the surprize and consternation of every one may be conceived, when, on examination of their bed, a small serpent of the most venomous nature—whose slightest bite was sure and speedy death, was discovered coiled up asleep between them.

How it got there would probably have remained a mystery to this day, but for an event scarcely less tragical than the melancholy fate of Madame Vallerton and her daughter, which, within six months, again threw the whole country into a fever of terror and amazement. Marion, deserted by Hugo for another favourite, in a fit of maddening jealousy rushed into

his presence, and frantic with rage and despair, after upbraiding him with his perfidy and ingratitude, plunged a poignard into his breast, and hastily withdrawing the weapon reeking with her paramour's blood, with the next blow buried it in her own heart.

The groans of the dying Curé soon brought his servants to his side; he still breathed, and making a sign as if he would speak, they ran for a confessor. Scarcely had he strength to make what atonement he yet could for the crimes of an almost unexampled life of deceit and wickedness, when all concerns with this world passed for ever from his sight, and the soul of Hugo Baptiste went to its last and dread account."

"And poor Madame Vallerton and her daughter," eagerly demanded the boys, as soon as the Doctor had concluded his story:—"was it Marion that put the serpent in their bed?"

"It seemed, as well as could be gleaned from the Curé's dying words," replied the Doctor, "that Marion had mixed some deadly poison in a glass of wine and water, of which

the ladies partook before they went to rest; but, to make doubly sure, and, doubtless, to mislead the public mind as to the primary and principal cause of death, Hugo Baptiste had provided her also with the serpent, with instructions to conceal it in the bed;—what share it had in the destruction of their unfortunate victims must be a matter of conjecture only; but, as their death was unhesitatingly ascribed to the sting of the reptile, the main purpose of their enemies was sufficiently answered."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, "I wish Phœbe could have heard this tale; it would have been a lesson to her, Doctor Rodolph, which I am sure it will be to us all, to mind our own affairs, and beware of convert making."

"True, true," said the Doctor, "to keep your own counsel is ever to be on the side of safety, but never more so than in a catholic country."

"The perfidious Marion!" exclaimed Alice St. Clair. "I am sure our Ninon would never be a Marion."

"God forbid! that all should be alike," replied the Doctor, "but place not too much trust in any; above all,—beware, as you observe, of convert making."

"How different this Marion, in fidelity, to my poor Peter—the Creole of Antigua," said Aunt Nel.

"Who was Peter?" asked the Doctor;—"I love to hear a tale of true fidelity."

"Oh do tell us about Peter, Aunt Nel," cried the boys,—"you promised us a story to-night, you know."

Mr. St. Clair looked at his watch—it was close on midnight.

Thus admonished, the Doctor rose reluctantly from his snug corner by the wood fire, wished "good night and God bless you," and shouldering his umbrella, as the storm had almost ceased, and promising to be within call the first time Aunt Nel told her story, trudged his way homewards, nothing fearing either ghost or goblin.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next morning, after a hearty breakfast, leaving St. Clair and the boys up to the ears in classic lore at their studies, and the ladies to their various household duties, I started off, none the worse for my tumble in the ditch, to fulfil a promise I had made the Doctor—to have a look over his conservatory and a small museum of natural curiosities that he had collected together during his residence in Belgium, and of which he was immensely proud.

It was one of those joyous, exhilarating mornings that so often succeed a tempestuous night at this time of the year, after a long drought; in the which all nature seems to have suddenly risen from a state of lethargy

and inaction into renewed life and animation, and to be expanding and recruiting itself in the fulness of renovated strength and freshness.

I might go on, if I were a good limner, to say how the herbage, and every plant and shrub of the field and garden seemed to be growing as you looked at them;—how the trees wept with joy, and the saucy flowers cocked their heads, and sent floating on the air the fragrant incense of their gratitude;—how the brooks danced and babbled, and the birds joined in choruses of the sweetest harmony; how everything that met your gaze seemed to be a reflection only of the grateful emotions awakened in your own breast;—but, who is there that has not heard and thought of the same things a thousand times before, pourtrayed in colours a million times more vivid and attractive than any this poor pencil could depict? The sun shone forth with glorious brightness, as if determined to reassert his sovereign power through all, and over all. The parched earth, having drank its full, was

basking in the plenitude of its satisfaction, "like a giant refreshed with wine;" while on the gale was carried far and wide the delicious perfumes of the innumerable flowers with which hardly a peasant's cottage garden but was gorgeously arrayed.

The romantic little stream of the Vesdre, swollen by the heavy rains that had fallen during the night, rattled along and foamed and fretted through the valley, greatly to the gratification no doubt of the finny multitudes that gamboled in its pleasant waters, no less than the self congratulation of the delighted brother of the angle, who, rod in hand and basket at his back, was not only insuring himself a good dinner, but the best of all sauces with which to do it justice.

If there is one feeling more joyous than another, I do think it is, after a good breakfast, to start off, nothing ailing mind or body, down to the river's side, a bright sun overhead and a fresh genial breeze blowing in your face. How greedily the lungs seem to inhale the refreshing blow from the waters—how the

eye revels over field and flood—how light beats the heart—how elastic goes the step—how braced and buoyant every nerve! O, did but man sufficiently appreciate the opportunities for health and happiness which the pursuit of nature's pastimes afford him—free, innocent, and uncontaminated,—fraught with all peace and every healing and ennobling virtue, how he would shun, how turn with hatred and disgust from the sickly-enervating, and oppressive parade and falsities of fashion.

Such were the thoughts that shot through my mind, as, trudging briskly on, I inhaled the invigorating morning breeze, and blessed my stars, as the victims of pampered sloth rolled past me in their luxurious voitures, that I had a pair of stout legs of my own, which I would not have exchanged for the best Flemish nag in all Belgium. So, crossing the Vesdre over the *Pont* by the bustling little village of Vaux, and striking off into a good carriage road leading to the neat little town of Flamille haute, and further on to Faveux, I soon caught sight of the Doctor's house,

perched on the hill top, and nestling, as it appeared in the distance, among a forest of young oaks and acacias and hazel trees. As I approached nearer, its wild character altogether disappeared, and a pretty villa residence, not unlike many of the same order in our own country, with verandah and portico entrance, standing on a neat lawn, with extensive gardens and meadow and orchard ground attached, skirted nearly all round by luxuriant shrubberies, and a thick belt of oak and hazel copse forming the ring fence, as it were, of the little domain, agreeably surprized me.

Having been ushered, with due formality, by an old faithful German domestic into the *salon*, I found myself in a handsome panelled apartment with gilt mouldings, rejoicing in the usual multitude of windows common to most Belgian houses, and opening by folding glass doors on to the lawn. From deep scroll cornices hung full curtains of the finest worked muslin with crimson draperies—looped up with broad silk bands of the same colour,

which had a very graceful and dressy effect. The floor, which was of dark oak—with a polish you might have almost seen your face in, was covered in the centre by a square of rich Persian carpet, on which stood a mahogany circular tripod table with a Parian marble slab top, decorated with a host of indescribable little curiosities that defy enumeration. A large sofa—covered *en suite* with the chairs and settees in the richest crimson velvet, which, ranged on either side of the chamber, unlike our modern reception rooms, left ample space for the use of your legs, occupied a prominent position opposite the stove, which, abutting from the chimney-piece a full yard or more on to the edge of the carpet, was, to my English eye, although, I believe, a specimen of workmanship in its way worthy of Quentin Metsys, the only ugly object of the whole collection. A marble console table, surmounted by rich girandols with six sconces for wax lights, ornamented each window pier; and over the mantle-piece, in an elaborately carved white and gilt scroll frame, stood a

noble glass—supported on either side by colossal or-molu candelabras, between which slowly and solemnly ticked an antique Venetian clock of matchless excellence.

Altogether, it was a handsome apartment, as I said before, and only wanted, to my mind, the floor carpeted all over—an English fireplace, and a little less formality of arrangement, to make it every thing that could be desired. I ought not to omit making mention of several high class pictures, by some of the best Flemish masters, that adorned the walls, and gave that character and consequence to the *tout ensemble* which nothing else can so well impart to any room, however elegantly furnished, as first-rate works of art.

Scarcely had I time to make these observations, when old Jannette came—curtsying and smiling again, to say—that, as she had searched every where about the house for her master in vain, most likely he was somewhere about the grounds,—"would I choose to go and seek him?"

"Nothing would please me better;" so,

passing without further ceremony through the glass doors on to the lawn, I soon espied the worthy Doctor in an old figured velveteen morning gown and black skull cap, enjoying himself among his cabbages and cauliflowers, and regaling his olfactory nerves with as much of the delicious fragrance by which he was surrounded, as it was possible any one, with the smoke of a meerschaum curling in graceful festoons about his nose and whiskers, could be sensible of.

"Well done—well done!"—said he, hastening to meet me, and with a cordial shake of the hand I wouldn't have given any but an Englishman credit for,—"this is brave of you. To tell the truth, I had half a thought you might be tempted by this lovely morning to come and pay the old bachelor a visit:—but, have you breakfasted?—ah! and all well at the Chateau — none the worse for the ghost, eh?—poor Phœbe! it served her right, though, the ninny.—St. Boniface! but this is a charming day after the storm.—There's a bed of cucumbers for you!—my neighbour Paunch-

poken would give his best pipe for the like—Confound the pilfering vagabonds, if they haven't walked off with No. 1, that I'd marked for my dinner to-day;—*n'importe*, I'll lay a snare shall catch them yet.—Now then, for the grapery—if you love flowers, I've a treat for you."

A treat, in truth, it was—of the first order.

The little Doctor was not only an enthusiastic admirer of all that is rare and beautiful in nature, but he was no mean scholar in the various sciences to all of which he seemed, heart and soul, to give his attention. A more delightful or instructive hour I never remember to have passed, than while listening to his eloquent and inspiring eulogiums on the bountiful and beneficent provisions of nature in all her works, for man's use and enjoyment.

"It is in this way," said he, when I could not but congratulate him on the blessings with which he seemed on every side to surround himself, "it is in this way—making nature, and the inexhaustible resources she af-

fords for contentment and gratitude, my study and delight—I have passed, what otherwise would have been many a heavy hour, with pleasure and, I hope, with profit.—But for my books, my garden, my botanical turn, and antiquarian researches in my exile, I shudder to think what sort of life I must have led.

"Why is it," said I, "that man is so prone to fly to any source almost but the right one for solace in affliction?"

"Because he studies man's works—not God's.—A sound and settled pursuit that draws the mind from morbid thoughts and vain repinings, can hardly be too highly estimated;—none, believe me, have I ever found so effectual for patience, and submission, and cheerfulness, as nature's study, which leading, as it ever must, to nature's God, what can be so full of gentle precept, and encouragement, and consolation? Few have had a fairer share of this world's troubles than Francois Rodolph. Had I looked to man for hope, my burden would have been into-

lerable—as it is, I trust, at least, that I have borne it meekly. This I do feel—that I have had no more laid on me than the power was given me to sustain. But, now let us go and take a lesson of practical industry from my busy neighbours yonder—worth all Lamartine's finest theories put together."

On we went moralizing, from the conservatory to the beehives—from the hives to the poultry-house—from the farm-yard to the fish-ponds, till not a nook or corner had been left unexplored, finding something to praise and profit by at every turn.

"I meant," said the Doctor, "to introduce you to my "grand hobby," as St. Clair calls it, to-day—my museum of wonders—that I suppose I must make a national affair of some day; but, really, the weather is so delicious, it were a sin not to take all we can of it; but you must bring them all to have bachelor's broth with me some day; and then, by St. Boniface! we'll have a benefit."

We continued walking leisurely on as we chatted, ascending gradually by a winding

path cut through the rock, over which the luxuriant foliage of the hazel hedge—on either side almost meeting, formed a natural bower for some distance, till we came out on a beautiful open flat of turf-land, overlooking a wide extent of the most charming scenery imaginable. Hereon, a bench of rough and rustic design had been constructed, for the use of those, who, led to the place for the sake of the magnificent view it afforded, might rejoice in a comfortable resting point after their ascent of the hill, from which they could at their ease enjoy the beauties around them. Behind us, about four miles down in a deep hollow, as it appeared at the distance where we were standing shrouded in a misty haze of smoke, from its innumerable manufactories, lay, like another Birmingham, the thriving mercantile city of Liége.

Before us rose Chevremont in all its grandeur—the ever memorable Chevremont; once the tragic theatre of such terrible scenes, but on whose dark summit was now alone perceptible, nestled amidst the clumps of gigan-

tic trees and shrubs by which it is surrounded, the little far-famed chapel of Notre Dame; up the steep, rugged ascent to which, the devoted pilgrim might be seen toiling beneath the blaze of the noon-day sun to pay his vows at this most sacred of shrines, and obtain remission of his sins. To the right stretched away as far as eye could reach, beyond the charming valley of the Vesdre—towards Tilf and Beaufays, a chain of richly wooded hills, broken here and there by deep ravines and precipitous cliffs, that, in the distance, seemed to hang like huge threatening giants across the flood. While, on every side, the prim farm-houses and neat white cottages of the peasantry, dotted plentifully over the landscape, produced a combination of wild yet homely, scenery, which might well invite the true lover of the picturesque so often to Rodolph's seat.

"This is my favourite spot," said the Doctor, making room for me by his side:—"here, since I became lord and master of the Chateau *Vert*, as they call it, (because I paint my gates and door-ways green) have I wiled

away with my book or pencil, more pleasant hours than I could count just now."

"By George! said I, "if it were my destiny to pass my days in foreign land, I never saw a spot more after my heart than this—What more could be desired? you have all that heart can wish for—a snug homestead, the purest mountain air—scenery on every side unsurpassed—fish, flesh, and fowl, fruits and flowers, of the best and cheapest, in abundance;—kind friends, approving neighbours, and, by all accounts, a reputation that might well endear you to the soil that gives it fame."

"I should be most ungrateful," replied the Doctor, "did I not freely acknowledge how much greater have been my acquisitions than my merits; and could I forget a certain happy land afar off beyond the mountains yonder, and certain old, fond and familiar scenes and associations, that, somehow, won't be forgotten, I might be well content to have neither thought nor wish beyond these valleys; and, when my time came, to have my bones laid in

rest here beneath this bench, which, bearing my name by universal accord, seems destined to hand it down immortal to posterity; but, alas! "*dulce domum—dulce domum!*"

"True — true," responded I, cheerfully, "still, if anything could reconcile the heart to exile, it is such a paradise as this: but, I am curious," continued I, anxious to give a turn to the conversation, "to know all about the 'fortunate hit,' as you call it, by which you have thus distanced all competitors, and immortalized the name of Rodolph."

"Ah, ah," cried he, evidently gratified at the thought, and taking off his spectacles, brightening the glasses with the corner of his chocolate silk pocket handkerchief, and adjusting them over his nose again — "that is, indeed, a tale worth telling. You know, already, the scrapes my patriotism led me into; how, with the hot-headed zeal—worthy of a better cause, for which my youthful countrymen are so noted, I must needs be interfering in matters with which a student of medicine, of all persons under the sun, ought never to

be mixed up. Instead of sticking to the scalpel and the lecture-room, nothing would do but I must be spouting inflammable doctrines, at the head of fifty more young madcaps like myself, subversive of all order and authority; till, drawing on myself the displeasure of the government, in addition to the implacable resentment of a noble family, by cutting off the nose of a scion of their house in a duel, there was nothing for it but flight, which, adding colour to the calumnious accusations against me, the result was, that, if I would be independent of my friends, I must e'en put my wits to work, to earn an honest living. In spite of my patriotism and republican pursuits, which occupied pretty much of my time and attention, I had managed to take a tolerably satisfactory degree in physic, and now blessed my stars that I had this main resource to rely on, but for which, heaven knows how long I should have had mere bread to eat. Whatever else a young man does, or leaves undone, let him fit himself for some useful honest calling:—however aban-

doned or contemned, while the tide is smooth and skies are sunny, he knows not how soon it may be his sheet anchor, to save him from starvation. So, putting my wits to work, and my shoulder to the wheel as well, after the usual ups and downs, rubs and rebuffs, doubts, difficulties and discouragements—inseparable from early efforts—unassisted by friends or funds, I pitched my tent at last in the thriving city of Liége; was indefatigable in my exertions, and irreproachable, of course, in conduct: still, the fruits were slow of growth—the fees came slowly in; till, one day, I was sitting pondering on twenty schemes of endeavour and improvement, and well nigh heart-sick with the slow progress I was making, when a carriage, with a flaming coronet on it, stopped at my door, and almost made me start out of my skin. It must be a mistake—it was the wrong house—a blunder of the coachman's—a blockhead! to set my heart beating in that manner. No, by heaven! it was no mistake. "Was Doctor Rodolph at home?" Oh, yes!—the Doctor was

at home — he would be disengaged immediately. In a moment after, in walked a tall handsome young Belgian officer, apparently in a delicate state of health — no other than the Count Eugene D'Ablet, heir and representative of one of the first families in the province. Having premised that he had been earnestly recommended to me by a mutual friend, at a ball given by the Grand Duchess, during a visit at Darmstadt—he proceeded to consult me about some nervous symptoms that his apprehensions had magnified into an affection of the heart. It was not my province to ask impertinent questions, but I could not but suspect, that, if the heart really had anything to do with it, it was a case, for successful treatment, rather within the province of the fair sex than the faculty.

Whether it was the pensive look, or language, or tone of voice, or what it was that inclined me to this opinion, I hardly know; but, certainly, it was my impression that if the Count Eugene D'Ablet was touched at all at heart, it was by a shaft from Cupid's qui-

ver, and what cure but one was there for that? Time would show—meanwhile, something must be done. Here was the difficulty. I never took less pains with a prescription—it was all one—my patient was in ecstasies. It was evident I understood his complaint—had knocked the right nail on the head. "There was no objection, then, to a good dinner in moderation, and a glass or two of champagne?" "Not a bit of it." The Count unquestionably regarded me as a man of talent, and pressing my hand warmly—assuring me of his great consideration and respect, and fixing a day for his next visit, at length he tore himself away. Never shall I forget my sensations at that moment. As his carriage drove off I fell back overwhelmed with delight in my chair, in which blissful state I remained, as if entranced, till reminded for the sixth time by Jannette—that my dinner had been getting cold at least an hour.

From that day, sir, every thing smiled on Francois Rodolph. The foundation stone had been laid, and soon uprose the beautiful

structure with incredible rapidity. My patron repeated his visits, and now, a frequent guest at his hotel, all doors were open to me. My waiting room was thronged — nothing went down but Doctor Rodolph. I was a protegé of the Count Eugene D'Ablet — that was enough. Soon a spruce *garçon*, in blue and brimstone, was added to my establishment, and Jannette made her appearance every Sunday in a black silk *robe*: nay, already, visions of something in the shape of a handsome smart blue Berlin, picked out with white—the arms of the illustrious house of Rodolph on the panels, and a couple of skew-ball Flemish geldings in their gay trappings, flitted before my eyes; nor was it long before these pleasant day dreams assumed the most practicable forms, and Dr. Rodolph's turn-out was the envy and admiration of the town.

"It never rains but it pours," they say. One morning, just as my usual daily levée was over, a plain close carriage rattled up to my door, and immediately after, one of the most

beautiful Blondes, eyes ever gazed on with delight, evidently by her air and manner a woman of high *ton*, was ushered into my room. What such a picture of health could want with a doctor puzzled me to divine; for, with the exception of a slight palor of the cheek and the least tremulousness of voice, which might result from the excitement of a first professional visit, as she threw herself into a chair, despondingly, there was not the shadow of a doubt but that Mademoiselle Thérèse Poignée had as little need, in fact, of a physician as I had. But that was her concern — not mine. Do you think your crack doctors would ever make their five thousand a year, if they were as conscientious as all that?—no such thing; so, throwing into my look an appearance of deep sympathy, my fair patient was encouraged to confide herself, heart and soul, to my care and counsel.

"Doctor, I want your advice."

"Mademoiselle, I am perfectly at your service—pray command me."

I should premise that Mademoiselle held, suspended by a little silver chain and tassels

from her fore-finger, a small green and scarlet silk purse, in which were plainly visible through its meshes, the glittering *louis d'ors*, some of which, no doubt, were so soon to be transferred to my *poche*, as my merits might entitle me. It might not have been done purposely, but I couldn't help seeing it, as I sat in my old leather chair with my back to the light—a position most essential to be taken invariably by discreet advisers—and the sun shone full on the lap of my charming patient, on which reclined the hand on the fore-finger of which, as I said before, my reward hung so temptingly. Now, here was evidence, at all events, to show that Mademoiselle was in earnest. No one pays a guinea, even in lavish England, for nothing, and my look must have satisfied any one that I thought so, too. If there was little in the case to excite much sympathy, who could be insensible to the irresistible appeals of such a seductive propitiator?

"Have I not had the pleasure of seeing you before—somewhere I think?" said I.

"Oh dear, yes!—indeed I have not forgotten

your kind complaisance at the Baroness Dundorff's, but I see all *my* fascinations were in vain—I made no very permanent impression, it seems."

"You wrong me there, by Heaven!—hope the Baroness is well;—a charming woman!—had no return of the old attack, I trust; but yourself—I can't discover a fault."

"How provoking! and I in the most pitiable condition imaginable;—can't tell what ails me—no appetite—not a wink of sleep—spirits gone—and, O, such flutterings and palpitations! too, and nothing gives me relief. Tried cod's liver oil and a camphor bag, by the Baroness's recommendation, to the side, but all in vain. My constitution cannot long bear up, that's certain, against these repeated shocks:—you must do something for me, or sink under it I must, and shall; but don't, for mercy's sake, say a word to the Baroness—she would only laugh at me, or say it's all fancy: or that my case is beyond the reach of the faculty, or some *badinage* of that sort."

"Some pain, I think you said, in the left side?"

"Yes, yes, here—just here."

"Frequent inclination to sighing, too?"

"Oh yes! and could shed tears twenty times a day. If only the door suddenly opens, or a loud knock comes, or a plate falls, or a child cries, my heart beats as if it would burst—my hand shakes, my cheeks burn, and I'm not the thing again for four and twenty hours."

"Appetite capricious?"

"Wretched, wretched! if it were not for the little dainties they compel me to swallow, and now and then a glass or two of champagne, I should have nothing but skin on my bones.—Am I wrong in taking the champagne?"

"By no means, I should have recommended it."

"And anchovies, and the *galantine de gibier* —the only things I can relish?"

"Not the slightest objection to either. Your pulse?—ay—lowish, and intermitting; easily agitated, you say; an arrival, the postman's knock—any sudden event makes you

jump, ay—ay—the nerves—my dear Madamoiselle—the nerves—nothing else—nothing else."

"Nothing else? Doctor Rodolph," indignantly exclaimed Thérèse Poignée, "nothing else: and is not that enough?—no sleep, no appetite, no spirits, pulse intermittent, health and happiness perhaps irrecoverably gone—really, Doctor, you have no more feeling, excuse me, than the Baroness Dundorff." As if to strengthen her point, and remind me that she could pay for what she purchased, the little green and scarlet silk purse seemed suddenly to share the emotion that agitated its fair mistress, and to give forth audible tokens of sympathy and commiseration.

There was a dead silence for some moments, during which my patient sat staring at me supplicatingly—but I was unmoved. It might have been that the sweet chinking of *louis d'ors* was not so new and captivating a song in my ears as it once was; or that filthy lucre had nothing to do with the interest I felt in my fair young friend; or that I was amused

at the pretty bye play of the scene, or perhaps thought that the money might be better spent; whatever it might be—I remained, as I said before, unmoved. Not so, Mademoiselle Thérèse Poignée. Up came the colour to her cheek, indignantly flashed her eyes, as rising majestically from her seat, and twisting the little silk purse tight round her finger, she said with a look and tone I shall never forget —"Then, you can do nothing for me?"

I had been inexcusably absent for a moment or two, I must admit. This roused me to myself; "Pardon, Mademoiselle," said I, smiling, "I was thinking how strange it was, that, scarcely half an hour before you entered the room, an esteemed young friend of mine, who has no more right to be on the sick list than you or I have, had left it almost angry with me because I dismissed him none the poorer for his trust in me—though, like yourself, he deserved my warmest sympathy;—and now I think, he must be a particular friend of your's, too, as I have often had the happiness of meeting you at the same tables."

"Indeed!—a friend of mine—not a great sufferer I trust?"

"Symptoms very like your own—simply, a nervous affection."

"Palpitations of the heart, incessant flutterings—constant agitation, *ennui* indescribable—spirits gone—no sleep, no appetite?"

"Not a wink—can digest nothing, too, but plovers' eggs, and marmalade and milk."

"Poor thing! is he young—disappointment—unrequited love, perhaps—may I know his name?"

"*C'est charmant, n'est ce pas?*" replied I, watching the effect as I handed her The Count Eugene D'Ablet's card.—"Eugene, you know, is a great sentimentalist."

Whether Mademoiselle knew so much of Eugene D'Ablet, or much more than she had any wish that I should suppose, the announcement of his name acted seemingly like a charm —"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed she, as she gazed, as if riveted, on the card in her hand, "*Mon Dieu! c'est drole.*" The colour came, and went, and came again to her cheeks:—in vain she

tried to look unconcerned, and to reassume that composure which but a moment or two before had marked her whole deportment; and not daring to trust herself further, I suppose, though I could see she would have given worlds, if she could, to have enquired a little deeper into the flutterings of Eugene D'Ablet's heart, forgot all about herself—received with a benevolent smile my advice to go, as their symptoms were so much alike, and compare notes with her friend Eugene, and promising to come and see me again very soon, if the further trial of the Baroness' camphor bag was ineffectual—squeezed my hand almost off, and vanished from the room.

That she took my advice, and the first possible opportunity to compare notes with poor Eugene, there cannot be a doubt. The result was miraculous—a perfect mutual cure was effected without any further aid from the faculty; and many a time, since, have we all enjoyed a hearty laugh together, and agreed that the Doctor's advice was not a whit less precious—because it was given *gratis*.

Nor were the Count and Countess D'Ablet the only parties benefited. If the fame of Francois Rodolph had not been sufficiently established before—his triumphant success was now confirmed beyond a doubt; so that it very soon became necessary for him to widen his doors, enlarge his rooms, and add a proper proportioned *laquais* to his *ménage*—in other words, to live in the style befitting the exalted position he held no doubt in his own, as well as everybody else's estimation.

Well, after a pretty long service—having put by enough to keep an old bachelor head above water for the remnant of his days, I quitted the ranks—bought the little box there and appendages,—resolved to devote myself to my favourite studies and pursuits, and to be still useful, too, in the "gratis" way, should my neighbours ever stand in need of my assistance.

Seven years have rolled away since the Chateau Vert first called me master. They have been the happiest and perhaps most profitable of my life; but with all, notwithstand-

ing the affection I must ever feel for scenes and circumstances to which I owe so much, and which I should be the most ungrateful of men to speak of otherwise than with pride and joy, a lingering hope—undying, inextinguishable *will* predominate over all philosophy—that I may not die an exile. I still have hopes to see again the country that gave me birth;—I shall make another struggle. At all events, they shall never have it to say, whatever else they may lay to my charge, that, as an alien, Francois Rodolph has ever disgraced his family or father-land."

"While the Doctor was telling his story, I had sat listening—unconscious of aught but the interest I felt in his conversation; and now, looking at my watch, found that it wanted but a short half hour to the Chateau dinner time.

"If you will take pot luck with me," eagerly interrupted the Doctor, "Jannette shall put another cutlet—that's all, in the pan, and a potato more in the pot; and, by St. Boniface! we'll make a glorious day of it."

It was not to be that day—"they would be sure to wait for me at the Chateau;—another time we would all come in a body and do justice to the hospitalities of Bachelor's hall." So, having strolled on together, till, by a circuitous wood path we came out into the high road—shaken hands, and exchanged the most cordial assurances of no more mutual regard and esteem than I am sure we felt for each other—a brisk walk soon brought me to the white gates of the *Chateau d'Anglais*.

CHAPTER X.

A SCENE awaited me on my return to the Chateau which I had little contemplated. There was an unusual stillness about the place as I approached the house, that created an indefinable apprehension in my mind that something extraordinary had happened during my absence. The first person I encountered was Ninon, whose red swollen eyes and crumpled apron bore evident testimony that my fears were not without foundation. I was about to question her, when St. Clair, coming down stairs carrying a most perturbed countenance, beckoned me into the *salon*.

"Look there," said he, pointing to a paragraph in Galignani, which he took from the

table—"poor Nel! I tell her it's a mercy." Seizing the paper, I could hardly repress an exclamation of gratification as, with emotions impossible to describe, I read as follows:—

"Fatal duel.—It is our painful duty to announce the melancholy result of a hostile meeting that took place, early in the morning of Saturday last, between Monr. Gerard Duvignon of thé Chamber of Deputies—universally and deservedly esteemed, and the Count Philippe de Montville, in the Boïs de Boulogne. Our readers will recollect the account which appeared in these columns some time back of the elopement, under very aggravated circumstances, of Madame Duvignon with the Count de Montville; since when, we understand, every endeavour has been made by the afflicted husband to discover the retreat of the fugitives, but in vain. Circumstances, however, of a most singular and unexpected nature, arising from certain fraudulent gambling transactions in which the Count's name has lately figured disadvantageously in the police reports—leading to their apprehension and eventual return to the capital, a meeting

between the enraged husband and the destroyer of his peace was the consequence, when the ball from the pistol of Monr. Duvignon, passing through the neck of his adversary—his death was instantaneous. The temporary disappearance of Monr. Duvignon from Paris has been thus rendered compulsory; but there is no reason to suppose that his absence from his friends and official duties will be of any long duration.———

"We hear, from the best authority," that the fascinating and accomplished Countess de Montville is in England, where she has been residing in the bosom of her family since her heartless and unaccountable desertion by the Count; whose untimely end will be no doubt regarded by many as a signal mark of retributive justice."

I was just going to exclaim, as I concluded the paragraph, "Thank God for all his mercies," when the Countess, with a face of deep woe that made her seem more interesting in my eyes than she ever looked before, entered the room with Mrs. St. Clair.

Pressing her offered hand—for there is a

sympathy between congenial hearts quite as much betrayed by looks as words—"this is, indeed,—*sad* news, I was going to say, but the word stuck in my throat—I could not so belie my feelings—"a melancholy, very melancholy affair, but—"

"It is all for the best, you were going to say," interrupted the Countess; "perhaps so—but I could have wished a fate less terrible, less sudden had befallen him;—with prolonged life, he might have, at least, had the opportunity, which now is cut off for ever, for repentance."

"Perhaps, had that opportunity been granted," replied I, its fruits might never have been those of contrition."

"He hadn't a redeeming point," said St. Clair,—"prolonged opportunities, my dear Nel, would only have added to the dark catalogue of a too extended course, already, of vice and profligacy; rest assured of that."

"Heaven wills always for the best," added Mrs. St. Clair, encouragingly, "its dispensations are ever merciful and just."

"Oh, yes—they are, they are!" sobbed

Aunt Nel, bursting into tears — tears, as I thought, rather of mortification and wounded pride, than of those deep harrowings of the heart—that unutterable desolation of soul, that misery inconsolable, which the poor bereaved woe-struck widow is so often wont to shed over the memory of her beloved one — "but he was my husband — what I have suffered on his account, this heart alone can ever know."

"He never merited its slightest sympathy," persisted St. Clair—evidently determined to resist any expressions even of regret for the fate of such a reprobate.

"Had he but written to me — had he but left me line or message—to bid me for ever farewell—to tell me that he had sought in another's smiles the happiness he could not find in mine—that would have been something; but to desert me without pretext or excuse, to leave me to the scorn and pity of the world — first wronged, then abandoned — O, no, that was not just—that was not generous!"

"Nay," urged St. Clair, taking her hand

affectionately between his, "throw no more tears away upon him."

"It is our duty to forget and forgive the injuries that are done us," added Mrs. St. Clair—to be reconciled to our enemies, and to pray for those who despitefully or ungratefully use us. De Montville's has been a dreadful punishment: this world, and all its concerns, for good or evil, has closed on him for ever—he has gone to his account: it is for one and all of us, in drawing the veil of oblivion over the past, to say, from our hearts, God's mercy be with him."

"Amen—Amen!" ejaculated Aunt Nel, as well as she could articulate with the emotion that could be no longer suppressed—"from my soul I say, Amen. May God, indeed, forgive him as freely—as fully as does this heart at this moment. O, my dear brother, pardon this weakness; these tears have relieved my poor heart of a great load; and Mr. Alan will advise us how best to act with respect to the Franconville estate, which, of right, descends to me. If its sale produce

enough to pay his debts, 'twill be a sacrifice well made."

"That will I," responded I, but inwardly determined, too, that not a sixpence more of Aunt Nel's should be sacrificed, if I could help it, to pay anybody's debts under the face of the sun; far less a wretch's who had swindled her already out of half her fortune.

The first shock over, Aunt Nel, by degrees resumed her usual cheerfulness, and, entering with me on the necessary preliminaries, in conjunction with Monr. R——, a notary of probity in the *rue de la Paix*, that weighty matter was soon put in a fair train for satisfactory settlement. If not a *franc* of the proceeds of the sale ever went into the pockets of De Montville's creditors, the blame, if any, must devolve on me, and not on his too conscientious Countess, who, if she had had her own will, would, I verily believe, have parted with the last *sous*, to have rescued from dishonour the memory of him who cared no more for her, over and above the possession of her money, than I do for his holiness the Pope at

Rome. But I wouldn't listen to any thing of the sort. There's no telling the trouble I had to make her see the thing in its right light. To-day, she was indisposed and could not bring her mind to business—to-morrow, would attack it next day; till, getting out of all patience, I was forced to declare positively that if she did not exhibit a little more rationality, I must throw it up altogether. This brought her somewhat to her senses, and heartily has she thanked me a hundred times for not giving way to that weakest point in her nature, and which will immensely deteriorate from her other good qualities, no doubt, in the estimation of many far-seeing persons; viz. too little regard for self; which, far from being a virtue as is often supposed, is, carried to excess, as was too often the case with Aunt Nel, a sin, as I told her, of no small magnitude. She knew her own good intentions; but the world held it an imperative duty not to be unmindful over much of the debt due to number One—an obligation which, if left unpaid, involved many other sacrifices besides that

of self; otherwise, little harm would be done.

I shall never forget the day when Aunt Nel, for I like that name better than all the Countesses in Xendom, made her first appearance in widow's weeds. For the life of me, although against all rules of decorum and propriety, I could not disguise my admiration, or help complimenting her on her good looks. In truth, I never had seen before, nor have ever beheld since, so interesting a picture of widowhood as Aunt Nel exhibited in her weeds, and I ventured to tell her as much.

"Do you really mean what you say?" said she, with a languid smile that went to my heart, and a side look in the glass, "it is not a dress that becomes every one."

"You mean," answered I, "there are so few that become the dress."

"Fie—fie!" said she, with another sweeter smile than the last, and another glance in the mirror—"you really think, do you, that Madame Violet has not made a fright of me?"

"She deserves a patent," exclaimed I,

warmly, "why, in pity's name, should widows be made frights of?"

Hereupon ensued a long discussion on the prevailing *modes* adopted for the display of domestic bereavements in England, by those painfully prominent establishments in almost every leading street in London—the purveyors of family mourning, who, by the strict harmony and correctness visible in every department, leave nothing to be desired except a little of Madame Violet's good taste, who deems it by no means necessary, either as evidence of right feeling or sound sense, for widows to add to their misfortunes by making frights of themselves. The fact is, there is a good deal more to be said on the subject of widows' caps than people imagine. It seems, as far as I can understand, that there are two sorts of widows' caps—one, extremely becoming; the other studiously the reverse—styled by the purveyors of family mourning—the consolable and the inconsolable;—the former patronized by those not utterly bereft of every hope—on whose memories the joys of matri-

mony still pleasantly lingering, visions of future orange blossoms *will* intrude, in spite of weeping weeds and wailings; the latter, by that disconsolate class who have buried all their hopes and sympathies for ever in the tomb of the departed.

Now, nothing can possibly be further from my thoughts than to treat otherwise than as most sacred the sorrows of the bereaved; but, as much of the scandal and annoyance to which young widows—comfortably circumstanced in particular, are often exposed, by the attentions of importunate admirers; and the chagrin and disappointment that not unfrequently discourage gentlemen on the look out for snug jointures, may for the most part be avoided by just pointing out the tokens by which all may know how far their aspirations are likely to be successful or not, I consider I shall have established a fair claim to the gratitude of both widows and widow-hunters, for whose especial benefit these remarks are made, when I have placed so momentous a matter in its right light, by which

they may not only see at a glance, if they are not wilfully blind, their true relative positions and interests, but likewise, be spared no end of trouble and heartburnings.

What more distressing, I should like to know, to an inconsolable relict—than the intrusive importunities of man in any shape; what more trying to the consolable—than eternal loneliness, and man in no shape?

Such, however, would seem to have often been the state of both, unhappily, till the late admirable introduction of the two caps—the "consolable," and the "inconsolable," by a celebrated mourning establishment in Brussels: it was a *desideratum* long recognized by the public at large, and which nothing could have more satisfactorily supplied. Never was anything better adapted to the purpose. There can be no longer any mistake—the sacred scruples of the inconsolable relict can now never be offended, nor the tender aspirations of the consolable destined to despair—the sanctity of the one remains unmolested; the placid hopes of the other are not fated to sigh in vain.

As my talents do not lie in pourtraying the interesting phænomena of millinery, I must refer such of my readers as may be curious about the exact pattern of the two caps in question, to Madame Violet's show-room; where, no doubt, samples of the latest *mode* are always ready for inspection. All I can say, from personal observation, is, that nothing, as far as I could judge, can be more exquisitely adapted to express the sentiments of woe consolable than the one: as to the other, there can be but one opinion about it: in it the prettiest woman in the world would be safe—in it she could never excite a tender throb—in it she must ever remain, what by its adoption it must of course be her wish to be considered—the emblem of hopelessness and woe inconsolable.

For all further particulars, a visit to Madame Violet's can hardly be too strongly recommended to those who attach the importance to this subject that it merits. There, besides caps, the most *recherché* assortment of every other article of family mourning—

graduated to harmonize with every possible shade either of public or private affliction, is always kept in stock. "The attention of bereaved ladies is particularly solicited," says Madame Violet's circular, "to the new consolable cap, '*La coiffe parfaite*, warranted of the newest and most approved design;'" "*alias*," as Aunt Nel would say, "to insure its object in the shortest possible lapse of time, consistent with decorum and the usages of an enlightened public." "Attention is likewise earnestly directed"—continues the Violet circular, "to the charming tearful novelty—'The Blighted Bud,' for juvenile dejection; as also, 'The Forlorn Hope,' specially dedicated to all classes of severe mourners;" *alias*,

> To those who've bade farewell to ringlets curl'd—
> Who've turn'd their backs upon a graceless world,
> And man, and all his works, to Old Nick hurl'd.

Of which pattern Aunt Nel's "*coiffe parfaite*" more partook, I do not consider myself at liberty to say, further than that, to my eye, so far from there being any thing severe or in-

consolable in it, it was, without exception, the most becoming widows' cap, to speak in plain English, that I ever saw in my life; and, what's more, I would bet my head she thought so too.—But this is a digression.

Nothing, perhaps, could have happened more favourable to the accomplishment of the wish nearest to my heart, viz. the restoration of the Chateau family to the position in their own happy land which they were so eminently qualified, to fill, than the death of De Montville. With Aunt Nel it seemed to have wrought an entire change of sentiments. Whereas, before, nothing but a life of strict seclusion appeared in unison with her feelings, now, the cause no longer existing that kept her spirits deadened, and the best hopes and aspirations of her heart as it were paralysed, it became every day more evident that that heart — so joyous in its nature, so kind, so companionable, so gentle, so generous! yearned, as well it might, for those still fondly cherished scenes and associations, for which, delude itself how it will, there is no substi-

tute, and which wounded pride alone had ever induced her to forego. It was clear that every hour she wearied more and more of the severe seclusion of their mountain home, and was casting wistful thoughts on the busy scenes going on in a world—of which, I could have told her, if she had not known it well enough without, no one was ever formed to be a brighter ornament than herself.

As may be supposed, I lost no opportunity to add all the weight I could to this propitious leaning of so influential a personage as Aunt Nel in the family, towards the consummation of my warmest hopes; and many and promising were the confabs we had together on a subject, that, somehow, the more it was discussed, the more mutually interesting and inevitable it became; till, having, by the most expert generalship, brought over, with the slightest possible reservations, Mrs. St. Clair to our interest, it was unanimously agreed to sound St. Clair the first opportunity, and if, after reasonable time for consideration, he was not amenable to reason, to make, one and all of us, a dead set at him,

storm the fort, and, *vi et armis*, carry all before us.

But, as I had sanguine hopes, from two or three remarks he had inadvertently let fall, that we should be spared the necessity of such extreme measures, it was resolved to let matters, for the present, take their usual course, as anything in the shape of a conspiracy against his liberty and free will—about which he was particularly tenacious, would be resented as an unpardonable liberty, and would certainly greatly retard, if it did not altogether defeat our wishes.

In accordance with this judicious policy, for which I take great praise to myself, a little note was despatched by universal acclamation to Doctor Rodolph—requesting the pleasure of his company that evening at supper, after which, Aunt Nel had promised to tell her story of The Creole of Antigua.

Our messenger returned:—the Doctor would come—"he would not be absent when Aunt Nel told her story for worlds; but hoped and trusted that his generous host would not make the punch again quite so strong."

CHAPTER XI.

IT is now time that the reader was introduced to a very important personage indeed in the little village of H——, who, destined to figure prominently in this narrative before its close, and to exercise a far greater influence over Aubrey St. Clair's views, than all my arguments or Aunt Nel's insinuations put together, ought not to be longer overlooked.

Within a stone's throw of the Chateau Anglais stood the proud domain of The Chevalier Bastien Sauvigné a wealthy *negociant* of Liége; who, with the acquisition of riches, deemed it, naturally enough, beneath the dignity of a Chevalier to eat any but his own cabbages. Hadn't the Chevalier

Vandershott *his Chateau d'Italien* at Tilff, and a flaming coronet on his carriage, and should the Chevalier Bastien Sauvigné eat humble pie to the Chevalier Vandershott? Heaven forbid! so, Madame's solicitations prevailed, the noble domain at H—— was purchased, and the Chevalier Bastien Sauvigné became the village Magnus Apollo in good earnest. What a proud thing to become all at once a great landed proprietor—to have a charming *maison de campagne* as well as counting-house, and a dashing pea-green coach—picked out with red, to convey you down to it every day when shop is shut. And O! what glory to see neighbour Gwousky's fat wife opposite, biting her nails behind the curtain, and almost mad with longing for the day when Gwousky, too, can have *his* brown and brickdust liveries, and his smart Berlin, and two fat Flemish geldings in flaming trappings at his door. And O! what exquisite delight to hear every one say—"What a happy man ought the Chevalier Sauvigné to be—what a paradise of a place—what an elysium—what gorgeous

salons—what matchless taste—what sumptuous views—what charming walks—what superb fruits—what lovely flowers—what darling fountains, and gold and silver fish!—

Talk of riches having their pains as well as privileges:—who, I should like to know, but would bless his stars to become lord and master of such a paradise with all its penalties; who, with such an elysium of his own, but might fancy himself indeed a god; who, with such fountains and gold and silver fish, but would drain every spring in the country, if necessary, to behold them shooting forth their sparkling streams as high as the chimney pots? Shall the Chevalier Bastien Sauvigné's visitors be disappointed, and his gold and silver fish endangered, for the sake of village murmurs—is not pond water good enough for paupers?—I should think so.

Now, St. Clair was a benevolent man; and though their wells often gave serious indications of premature exhaustion—which might well alarm them, not a word or gesture of impatience escaped him. Perhaps he reflected,

like a true philosopher, what he might be tempted to do if he had fountains and gold and silver fish of his own, and visitors to entertain; but he could not repress a smile, now and then, when the young Chevalier Furiosus, (as he was called from the extraordinarily fierce effect of his moustache on features naturally stern and lowering) who occasionally dropped in to have a chat, and give Alice St. Clair a lesson in botany, used to weep almost over the privations of the poor.

Now, it is to this identical young gentleman that I would more especially introduce the reader. Although the offspring of a merchant, the young Chevalier could hardly have had a better opinion of himself if he had been son and heir of the Czar himself. That, however, could hardly be accounted a peculiarity in him, which is so common with the majority of his countrymen favoured with fortune's smiles. It is amusing to see with how little a Belgian will bless himself; and when it is granted that Master Furiosus certainly could boast of better native reasons for self respect

than fifteen out of twenty youngsters of his age and *status*, it will not surprise those acquainted with the Liégois as well as I am, if he regarded himself with tolerable complacency, and even considered himself privileged to cast sheep's eyes now and then at his sweet young neighbour. Hadn't he passed a winter at Brussels,—hadn't he a third cousin—a member of the Chamber of Representatives,—and *carte blanche* at the tables of the richest Bourgeoisie:—hadn't he dined once at the Embassy,—his clothes always built by a tip top tailor of the Place Royale, and loads of money in his pocket?—what wonder, then, if, with so many advantages—a rattling fortune in prospect—the smiles of all the prettiest Liégoises at his command, and a full grown moustache, he didn't think small beer of himself?

Now, if the truth must be told, the continual droppings in of the young Chevalier on one pretence or another, which had at first been viewed in the most friendly and neighbourly light by every member of the family,

had of late given considerable cause of uneasiness to Mrs. St. Clair; for it could not escape the observation of so watchful a parent that the sheep's glances, which between two young persons of Miss Alice and Master Furiosus' time of life were all very natural and harmless enough, soon grew into the most ardent and unmistakeable gazes of admiration, at least—on one side of the question. Here indeed was cause for alarm, and I don't wonder at all at Mrs. St. Clair—good woman! declaring to Mr. St. Clair that—"a stop must be put to such goings on."

What Aunt Nel could have been thinking of puzzles me. It was all very pretty for her to profess to regard the young Merchant's palpable attentions as mere ordinary acts of gallantry and nothing more, and to laugh at Mrs. St. Clair's apprehensions. It was not because she had an unconquerable aversion to large hands and feet and sandy hair, that everybody should be of the same opinion as herself; besides, she had had a tolerably fair experience of the joys of alien alliances, and

if any woman should have been wide awake, one would think she ought. As for St. Clair, he only listened and pondered and smiled—but could not help acknowledging, as he afterwards confessed to me privately—that Alice *had* seemed more attentive to her toilet of late, and certainly *did* appear to be very fond of the path that overlooked his neighbour's raspberry bushes. He must own, too, that he was somewhat surprised to find on asking her one or two simple questions in botany, in spite of all the young Chevalier's instructions, she hardly knew a stamen from a corolla; and now he thought of it, Professor Furiosus himself blushed up to the ears, the other day, when he asked him to what class and order of Linnæus the Papaver Somniferum belonged:—but it was all a pack of stuff and nonsense, nevertheless."

Mrs. St. Clair, say all we could, persisted in inclining to the belief, that, so far from being all stuff and nonsense, if not checked in the bud, it would be nothing more nor less than a repetition of the De Montville affair—"mark her words!"

It was, unquestionably, rather a hard case for poor Alice, and I felt for her.—As I told Aunt Nel, some allowance ought to be made. It was a serious drawback to the perfect felicity of her mountain home—it would have been a serious drawback to any sweet girl similarly circumstanced, that there were no Beaus at H—— —alas, no! with the solitary exception of the young Chevalier, not a sign or symptom of one in any tolerable shape whatever. Let any young lady of eighteen next birth day—just budding into beauteous womanhood, and with a heart overflowing with tenderness and affection, ask herself how she would like to pass her days in a region, be its other attractions what they might, where, from year's end to year's end, she had no chance of ever catching a glimpse of any thing in the shape of that indispensable requisite to a maiden's happiness—a nice young man; except when he was occasionally being whirled past her *en route* for some favoured destination, as fast as post horses could convey him. Let her ask herself, I say, that plain question,

and she will not be surprised if Alice St. Clair sometimes indulged a longing wish to see something of the bright world moving beyond her mountain home, and which her young and ardent fancy peopled, naturally enough, with the most charming and fascinating objects.

Had there been but a choice at H——, or even within a circuit of ten miles, it would have been something; but, no! the only approachable Beau, with the slightest pretensions, was the young Furiosus, who, although a monstrous don in his own eyes, and an amazing favourite with all the fair Liégoises of the neighbourhood—who knew the weight of the old gentleman's money bags, was but a sorry sample, after all, of what a Beau ought to be. Still, any sort of a beau was better than nothing, and there were, as I said before, great excuses to be made if poor Alice sometimes might seem to lend too ready an ear to those little flattering gallantries, which, if they went, as is probable enough, pleasantly into one ear, I was always perfectly of

Aunt Nel's opinion, passed harmlessly enough out at the other. For myself, I never had the slightest fear that the daughter of a St. Clair, because she now and then wiled away a playful half hour in a few innocent little flirtations over the raspberry bushes, would ever be seduced into presiding over coffee bags and sugar tubs. Still, it might be as well, as Mrs. St. Clair seemed to think, to keep a sharp look out over the young Crœsus; as it was evident to everybody with a grain of penetration that his eyes and thoughts, when Alice was in view, were always in one direction;—it was clear as noon-day, that the fair maid of H—— had made a most decided conquest in that quarter.

It cannot be denied, too, that, although Miss Alice would, no doubt, have as soon parted with one of her eyebrows as become Madame Ferdinand Sauvigné, she was not one half as indignant, as she pretended to be, at these manifest indications of partiality on the part of the young merchant. Whether it was to tease her papa, or please herself, or spite the

other Belles of the neighbourhood, nobody knows; but it would be a deviation from the truth to say—she did not continually choose the walk that led towards the raspberries; so that it was not long before a report got wind in the village—that there was actually an *affaire d'amour* on the *tapis* likely to lead to a happy alliance between the son and heir of the Chevalier Bastien Sauvigné—the wealthy *negociant* of Liége, and the lovely and accomplished daughter of Monr. Aubrey St. Clair, and niece of Sir Giles Aubrey St. Clair, of O—— Park, &c. &c. When it came to Mrs. St. Clair's ears, the indignant nature of that excellent mother's feelings could only be judged of by the deep flush of honest ancestral pride that mantled her cheeks.—Aunt Nel laughed outright; St. Clair merely smiled, but in a manner, to those who knew him, sufficiently demonstrative of his thoughts; while Alice, evidently enjoying the joke, tossed her head and turned up her pretty little nose in a most unaccountable manner, but which left no doubt in her fond father's mind that the

illustrious escutcheon of the St. Clairs was in no danger of suffering blot or blemish by child of his.

Thus far have I thought it advisable to put the reader, who takes any interest in this narrative, into possession of circumstances at the Chateau, which, although in themselves of trifling account, led, as will be seen in the sequel—to important issues; and which, however St. Clair, in his usual peculiar way, might affect to make light of and "poh—poh"—in truth, as every one could see, were every bit as much a source of disquiet to himself, as to his amiable and far-sighted lady. For myself, I had my own motives, when I saw how the wind lay, for steering my quiet course accordingly.

Matters—in themselves insignificant, frequently lead to grand results. How often is that, about which we have been most solicitous and taken no end of fruitless pains, accomplished in a moment by some fortuitous event—that has more power to crown our wishes with success than all our interests

and endeavours put together. The chapter of accidents, although ever a precarious resource, teems with eventful incidents.

Some owe their impunity from evil—and their familiar acquaintance with all good, to one cause—some to another:—no matter how humble appears the agency, if the result be profitable. It seemed fated that our friends, the St. Clairs should owe *their* best fruits, less to their own good management, than to the malpractices of their neighbours.

At the extremity of the Chateau grounds, a little way beyond the spot where Alice St. Clair was wont sometimes to linger in admiration of the Chevalier Sauvigné's raspberry trees, in an angle formed by the quickset hedge that divided his premises from their's, a wild, ivy-grown uncultivated spot, stood a Cave—originally designed for a reserve garden wherein to cultivate and preserve certain vegetables for winter use; but it had been so long disused when St. Clair took the place, that it was nearly overrun with briers and ivy and wild honeysuckles; and, certainly, if there was one spot more than another calculated to

inspire, in the shades of evening, sombre thoughts, it was this. By day-time, in summer, it was the pleasantest in the whole garden, for, completely overshadowed by the luxuriant foliage of the acacias and hazels and silver firs by which it was enclosed on every side, the sun's rays were excluded, and a more cool and refreshing retreat from the noon-day heat could scarcely be desired.

But the places most delightful by broad daylight are often the gloomiest at night, and certain it is that when any of the youngsters passed the cave after nightfall many an apprehensive glance was cast behind them as they hurried quickly on.

Often would St. Clair, like a sensible father, take his little ones by the hand, and, entering the cave, try to convince them how groundless were their fears, but all in vain. There was a spell attached to the spot; and one day when jokingly alluding to the H—— ghost, as it was called, in the presence of the young Chevalier, Mrs. St. Clair declared he changed colour, and looked quite confused.

"Perhaps," said he, "it is the spirit of the old Bishop of Liége, that was murdered by William de le Mark. They say it wanders by moonlight about the mountains, and may be seen, on every anniversary of his assassination—and for six nights after, kneeling, as twelve strikes, in the little chapel of Notre Dame at the top of Chevremont."

That there was an apparition of some kind, quite distinct and separate from Phœbe's ghost—that sometimes haunted the cave, was certain. The fact, in the estimation of every one but St. Clair—who was extremely tiresome on some points, was established on the unimpeached veracity of several of the family, including Ninon herself, who maintained, as she hoped for salvation, that she had seen it with her own eyes, flitting about the grounds thrice within the last few nights. Nay, Mrs. St. Clair—who was anything but a weak minded woman, remembered an awful instance that happened once to herself, which, though not exactly a case in point, was proof incontestable that wandering spirits of ano-

ther world were not the mere idle phantoms of a morbid imagination, as some supposed, and which, notwithstanding that she had told it fifty times before, was never an old story, so will bear telling once more.

But as the Doctor is coming, and story-telling to be the order of the evening, it would be unhandsome in the extreme to rob him of so great a treat as I am sure he would regard this soul-stirring tale from the lips of our esteemed hostess.

We will, therefore, with the reader's kind consent, proceed no further till after his arrival; which, considering the entertainment his society afforded us on the occasion of his last visit to the Chateau, is a compliment only due to him.

CHAPTER XII.

IF there is one trait in a man's character more to be admired than another, it is punctuality. In money matters it is not to be sneezed at; but at meals, its observance, if things are to go on smoothly is literally and emphatically indispensable. There are some people who make it a point always to arrive three quarters of an hour after everybody else; so that, if you happen to have a particularly delicate dish of fish or any other dainty that ought to be done to a bubble and no more, what's the consequence? your dinner's dished up in rags to accommodate the insufferable vanity and selfishness of Mr. Slowcoach, who, if he ever served me such a trick,

might wait a long while before he got his legs under my mahogany again.

I knew a Physician of some notoriety once, at the West end, whose invariable rule, when he was asked to dinner, was never to make his appearance till the company were all seated at table; when, bustling up to the lady of the house, he would whisper mysteriously in her ear something evidently that overwhelmed her with regret; and having cast a benignant smile around, and squeezed the hand of his disappointed host till he almost drew tears from his eyes, he would hurriedly make his exit, as certain as he lived that nothing would be talked of for the remainder of the evening but poor Doctor Scudabout and his numerous engagements.

One day a crony of mine, who had been served in this way more than once by the Doctor, was determined to be a match for him—so, an irresistible invitation was sent him to meet some particular friends on the following Friday. As usual, about three quarters of an hour after the appointed time, allowing the

customary twenty minutes grace, up rolled the Doctor's green chariot, and having deposited the august person of its master, off it went home again like a shot. It was evident there was no intention of merely taking a whiff of the good things this time.

"Good heavens—my love," cried Denby to his wife, as Scudabout entered the room in which not a soul but themselves were sitting, (having dined long ago with the youngsters at two o'clock)—"didn't you send a note to let the Doctor know our dinner was put off till next week?"

"That I did—not, my dear," stammered Caroline Denby—looking piteously, first at her husband then at their disconcerted guest, "the truth is I thought there would be no necessity, as the Doctor would be sure to be engaged: it was extremely remiss of me—it was inexcusable;—but a chop or a steak shall be served in less than half an hour. Though we picked a bit with the children in the nursery to-day, if the Doctor will only stay and forgive me this one little time—the cloth shall

be laid in a moment, and we will form a cozy trio."

"No, the Doctor was sulky, as no doubt you or I should have been to be treated after this fashion.—"He could not have stopped above an hour at most—had ordered his carriage at nine—must be at Lady Georgiana Matilda Beauclerc's by ten minutes past. Should drop in at the Athenæum, and pick a bone. Hoped the little ones were all well; smiled grimly as he pressed poor Denby's hand, and, seizing his hat, started off on his legs for once, to solace himself, as he best might, over his solitary fifteen pennyworth at his club.

Not of the Slowcoach or Scudabout genus was our worthy little Francois Rodolph—no such thing. Punctual as clock-work, up he came trotting apace on an old favourite pony that had the honour of carrying him on all occasions when either expedition was required, or, as in the present instance, it was essential and proper to display before the ladies a pair of spotless drab kerseymere trousers and

handsome goat-skin boots—in drawing-room trim. It did one's heart good to see him; health on his open manly cheek—benevolence in his eye—puffing away, with his broad brimmed slouched felt hat and scarlet umbrella, his inseparable companion and which seemed to serve him equally well for riding whip as walking staff, looking the picture of happiness and independence. It was easy to see as he recognised some of us from the road with a view halloo, that he was in unusually high spirits.

"There," said he, as he dismounted and threw the bridle to Fred—his chief equerry, after having saluted the ladies and tapped the boys all round with his umbrella—"isn't *Blanc-pied* a beauty? See how he pricks his ears, and curves his neck, and paws the ground, as if proud of his burden."

"I shouldn't wonder in the least," said Aunt Nel, patting *Blanc-pied* affectionately, "if a horse knows a 'snob' from a gentleman as well as I do."

"Sir Charles Bell's physiology of the horse's

head," corroborated I, "which every equestrian ought to study, is conclusive on that point."

"I'm as sure of it as I live," continued the Doctor, as we walked chatting and laughing up to the house. "That there's an instinctive reverence in the disposition of a well bred horse for a gentleman is manifest to every one with the penetration of an owl. The ancients have decided it beyond a question. Herodotus has a fine passage bearing strongly on the subject. Only mark the noble animal if a gentleman, (not a gent) approach to mount him—see how he erects his crest, points his ears, and cocks his tail, as if glorying in his privilege. If a 'snob' go to handle him, behold the difference—either he snorts aloud, or his eye flashes indignantly at the affront offered him; or his head hangs and his tail drops as if ashamed of his company."

"I see nothing for it, then," interrupted Aunt Nel, laughing, "but for those dubious and too ambitious equestrians who *will* be on horseback, to turn their eyes unceasingly in

the direction of their Bucephalus' tails, lest during their most rampant aspirations they should drop, and they be taken for 'snobs.'"

"Right, right! cried the Doctor—delighted—"nothing could be better. If gents *will* ride, by all means, as a general rule, their safest plan *would be* to sit full face to the crupper."

"But how would that save their reputation?" said I.

"Don't you see?" said he, "that the possibility of a visible dropping of their steeds' tails—the infallible 'snob token'—might be in a great measure defeated by adopting them, if amiable, as reins?"

"By George!" said I—"I never thought of it in that light."

"And don't you see, too," continued the Doctor, "that this would prove their wisdom every way, and show the world they had learnt Greek; and that, if 'snobs,' they were at least philosophers, and acted up to that excellent maxim of the ancients γνωθι σεαυτον?"

"*Ma foi!* but you are too learned for me now," exclaimed Aunt Nel—"next time I must thank you, Doctor Rodolph, to confine yourself to quotations, if you cannot do without the ancients, from the Latin authors; for, at present, in spite of all Fred's grinding, my progress in the Greek has been but slow."

"Now answer me, Doctor, candidly," said I, stopping short, and holding him by a button—"is it necessary—is it expedient, I say, is it proper for women to learn the classics?"

"The classics?" repeated the Doctor, contemplatively, "the classics?" and glancing suspiciously at Aunt Nel, who evidently awaited his answer with great glee and impatience, and then at me, as if he thought there was something in the wind—"really, said he, "it is a question, Mr. Alan, that merits deep consideration."

"How now," interposed St. Clair, who, having made his approach from the lawn, had been standing behind us for a moment unperceived, "who is too learned for my Nel?"

"Come, come, Aubrey," said I, "you shall

answer for the Doctor, whose gallantry will lead to some terrible calamity some day as sure as fate: what say you—ought women to be taught Greek and Latin?—*I* maintain—"

"No—no, that's not fair," shouted the Doctor, "we insist that you don't prejudge the case."

"I can see no possible objection to it," replied St. Clair, with gravity, "provided always, as we lawyers say, that they confine their knowledge to the four Gospels and Virgil's Georgics."

"Insufferable condescension!" cried Aunt Nel, indignantly, "as if men alone were scathless, and might riot and revel on forbidden ground with impunity. Scandalous inconsistency!—that that should be a sealed book to women's eyes, which tends so much to enlighten and ennoble the understandings of their lords and masters—it's a riddle to me, Doctor Rodolph—I can't understand it."

"And so, my dear Countess," condoled the Doctor, with a most whimsical expression of countenance, "I pray you let it remain:

the men ever were, and ever will be arbitrary, inconsistent monsters; but there's one comfort remember, even in affairs of that highest prerogative of theirs — intellect, forsooth, about which it must be owned they do give themselves most preposterous and unwarrantable airs—all is not gold that glitters, eh, my dear Mrs. St. Clair?"

"By the bye," exclaimed that excellent lady, with an approving smile at the Doctor, "we have a treat for you to-night; but you must come and see it growing, 'with your own eyes,' as Ninon says, or you will think it came in the Devon hamper; or that we sent to Chiswick for it to surprise you."

"Yes, yes! applauded St. Clair—delighted, and making a rush towards the cucumber beds—"I've kept it on the stalk till the last moment on purpose. I'll take a vote from every one—whether Aubrey St. Clair hasn't beaten Francois Rodolph hollow."

It certainly was a picture to behold—that cucumber. The Doctor gazed, and winked, and fidgetted, and couldn't but acknowledge,

that "bating the superlative one that the young thieves had stolen from his own frame —he had seldom seen a prettier specimen—it was worthy a silver medal from the *Societé Botanique* of Brussels."

St. Clair was in his glory because he had for once the start of his scientific neighbour. Mrs. St. Clair was delighted because her husband was rejoiced—Aunt Nel sweetly sympathized with the Doctor, by which the mortification of defeat lost all its sting—in fact we were all delighted, and just in the best possible humour to hear Ninon's acceptable summons to the supper table.

"Give me joy," whispered the Doctor, falling back a pace or two as we approached the house, and catching me by the arm, "I've famous news for you."

"The deuce you have!" said I, my thoughts filled with the image of the prize cucumber— "you've caught the thief, eh?"

"No—no,—better than that—brave accounts this morning from father-land;—before another moon, or I'm dreaming, Francois Rodolph will no longer be an exile."

"Ah by Heaven — that's something like!" cried I, feeling, if I know my own heart, to the full as much rejoiced at the little Doctor's good tidings as he could feel himself—"then the lost nose has come again, eh?"

"Better still—Herblay has gone to heaven, and left me his forgiveness as a legacy. So, no end of interest is at work. If I will only make one or two concessions that I shan't stick out about—there's a free pardon for me, and—" There was no time to talk more about it at present—St. Clair was shouting out "supper," at the top of his lungs, so, "*mum*, for the present," added the Doctor, putting a finger to his lips—"it's time enough to cry when you're out of the wood;" and so saying, and returning Ninon's *congés* with a benevolence that did honour to his understanding, down we sat, as happy a little party as kindliness and unanimity ever drew together.

As the Chateau *petites soupers* were always pretty much after the same rule; only, that the fish was broiled one day, another, fried; and the cold beef, when there was any, to-night—sirloin fashion, to-morrow—the goodly

round, and so on, I don't know that there was anything extraordinary to record on this occasion; except that there might have been an extra dish or two in honour of the Doctor, which our ever considerate hostess, with her usual thoughtfulness, knew he was partial to; as likewise a special cover between Miss Alice and me, under which awaited my approval—some of the renowned *boules de Londre*, of which I had expressed my unmeasured approbation. Nor is it necessary to say that quite as much justice was done by us all to the feast as on any former or subsequent occasion that I can call to mind. St. Clair had suffered himself to "be advised," and kept ever since steadily to the stout. The Doctor and the Sautern were on the best possible terms with each other; and as for the clouted cream, it was universally pronounced a luxury fit only for the gods. At length, the cloth having disappeared, the tables, as in good old times of yore, were drawn; the cheerful log fire set crackling and blazing again up the chimney, and while St. Clair superintended

the preparation of the punch, round we drew our chairs, the Doctor occupying his favourite corner, where he could roast and rub his left leg to his heart's content, without let or hinderance.

"This is delightful," said he, poking the wood with the *fourgon*, so as to give his indulged member every possible gratification, and rubbing away till Aunt Nel reminded him that "they were his best Sunday trousers he was wearing into a hole."

"What are *you* laughing at, you gipsy?" returned the little Doctor, not deigning to notice Aunt Nel's impertinence, and addressing himself to Miss Alice, whose fancy being wonderfully tickled by Aunt Nel's observation was leading her into all sorts of indecorums —"Nay, nay—laugh away,—you think I don't know, you sly boots, all about it."

"About what?" roared Alice and Aunt Nel together, "you told us yourself they were your Sunday's best."

"You thought, did you, to keep it all so secret?" continued the Doctor, with a mis-

chievous wink at the company, and pulling a provincial paper out of his coat pocket—"you think I don't know what makes you so merry—how sly, to be sure; well, well—wonders will never cease—*écoutez!*" saying which, he read in a distinct voice, every now and then casting an eye to see the effect it produced on us all, the following highly interesting paragraph from the *Journal de Liége*, which the reader may be assured is a *verbatim et literatim* translation from the original.

"*On dit.*—We hear, from unquestionable authority, that a matrimonial alliance is on the *tapis* between the fortunate and gifted son and heir of one of our wealthiest and most distinguished *citoyens*, and the lovely and accomplished daughter of an English gentleman of rank and fortune, who has with his amiable family been a welcome sojourner among us for some time past, not a hundred miles from H——. If report speaks true, there is nothing to prevent the celebration of the intended nuptials, early in the forthcoming spring."

Such a shout of irrepressible glee and amazement followed this entertaining announcement—delivered by the Doctor, as if to heighten its effect, in a serio-comic tone—half ludicrous, half reproachful, that must have removed in an instant every particle of dust by which his vision professed to be obscured. What his real thoughts might be, as he doubled up the paper and replaced it in his pocket, can only be guessed at by the mischievous twinkle of his eye, and something very like a spasmodic grin that pursed up the corners of his mouth, and left it doubtful whether he was on the brink of a flood of tears, or a violent horse laugh.

"Heaven help us!" ejaculated St. Clair—ushering in the punch bowl—"that wants something to wash it down—eh, Alan?"

"A pretty kettle of fish," said I, turning to Mrs. St. Clair, who was slowly recovering from her consternation.

"Dreadful!" exclaimed she, "surely Dr. Rodolph, you don't—"

"Nay, nay," interrupted the Doctor, mali-

ciously, " all I know is, that it's the talk of the whole neighbourhood."

" Dreadful!" reiterated Mrs. St. Clair; while Aunt Nel and Alice broke out into a fit of such immoderate laughter, as to render any further conversation for some moments impracticable.

" Nel, my love," remonstrated Mrs. St. Clair, deprecatingly, " this is no laughing matter."

" On the contrary," cried Nel, as well as she could articulate between the paroxysms of her mirth,—" a better joke I never heard in my life. O! my dear brother—make haste with the punch, or I shall die."

" The presumption, indeed, of these vain Liégeois," continued Mrs. St. Clair,—" what next, I wonder?"

" Rather cool, I must own," echoed St. Clair.

" I was thinking," said I, " if an action for defamation would lie—"

" Not worth the powder and shot," replied the Doctor.

"We shall be the jest and laughing stock of the village," pursued Mrs. St. Clair.

"We can laugh, too," condoled Aunt Nel.

"I can see nothing for it," observed the Doctor, "but sending Miss Alice without a day's loss into a convent, or packing up your traps and hurrying her off with all possible speed to old England."

"What run away," laughed St. Clair, "perhaps before we're hurt?—that would be brave with a vengeance."

"I always thought what those nonsensical botanical lectures would end in," reminded Mrs. St. Clair.

"I don't approve myself," responded I, exchanging looks with the Doctor, "of juvenile Professors with soft blue eyes and curly *moustaches*, for young ladies."

"Well, I must take pity on her, I suppose," said the Doctor, "and make her Madame Rodolph; there can be no objection to that?"

So handsome a proposition was received as it merited—with universal acclamation. Little did the young Chevalier think at that moment

of the plans plotting against his peace, much less of the formidable rival that had entered the lists against him. As for Alice herself, what the true nature of the conflicting emotions that agitated *her* bosom might be, was known only to her own heart. "She had no adequate powers of speech to express her appreciation of the Doctor's generosity; but Aunt Nel would assure him, that, in demanding reasonable time for consideration, he was by no means to resign himself to despair. He would agree with her, she was sure, that it was always best to be *quite* off with the old love before you were on with the new."

Matters being thus arranged to the satisfaction of every one, and the punch going round, once more all was merriment and unanimity.

"Has Mr. Alan told you about the Ghost, Dr. Rodolph, that Ninon says she saw three times in the garden last week?" asked Fred.

"What, another Ghost, boys—and Ninon saw it, too?"

"Yes—yes—she declares, as she hopes for

salvation, that she saw it three separate nights in the shrubbery with her own eyes,—and Furiosus says it is the spirit of the old Bishop of Liége that was murdered by the wicked William de le Mark and wanders at night about the mountains; and, on every anniversary of his assassination, may be seen, as twelve strikes, kneeling before the virgin in the chapel of Notre Dame at the top of Chèvremont. I shouldn't wonder," continued Fred —changing colour, and glancing round the room, "if it is in the grounds now, if we were to go out—near the Cave."

"There let him stay then, Fred," said the Doctor;—"fiddle de de about the old Bishop of Liége; Master Furiosus knows better about it than all that, I'll warrant."

"By the bye, Doctor," said Mrs. St. Clair, "talking of the Virgin—they say her effigy in the chapel of Notre Dame on Chèvremont, will rest no where but there; is it so?"

"So they say," replied the Doctor," of course you know the story?"

"There are such a variety of versions of

it," replied Aunt Nel, "that one hardly knows which is the correct one."

"Well, I believe the right version," continued the Doctor, "is this. One day, a miniature stone image of the Virgin—the production of a shepherd, was found, to the wonder of every one, on the top of Chèvremont; but, that not being deemed a fit spot whereon to erect a shrine to its honour, it was removed with much pomp and rejoicing first to Beaufays, then to Chaudfontaine, then to another place—then another—at none of which it would remain; till, one morning to the amazement of every one it was again discovered, as at first, on the summit of Chèvremont. Such a miracle could not be misinterpreted. The Virgin, evidently, would only rest at Chèvremont. Whereupon, the little Chapel of Notre Dame—there standing at this moment, was built and established by the instrumentality, as is generally supposed, and under the auspices of the Jesuits.—From that day to this, no Shrines, perhaps, in all Belgium have enjoyed a greater share of popular de-

votion and support than those of Chèvremont; at which pilgrims by dozens of every rank and age may be daily seen, as you know, kneeling and telling their beads on their toilsome ascent up the mountain, to the grand idol of their hopes and adorations."

"And do the people, think you, really believe this marvellous tale of the Virgin's signal preference for Chèvremont?" asked Alice St. Clair, producing from the drawer of a small cabinet in which she kept a collection of mysterious little curiosities, a handful of mementos she had purchased on several occasions on the mountain for the Doctor's inspection — amulets — crucifixes — chaplets — saints and *sacré cœurs*, and heaven knows what else besides—"It seems incredible."

"As certainly and sacredly as you and I do not," replied the Doctor.

"And the Priests?" added I.

"Would appear as implicitly to believe it, too; at all events, whatever may be their private creed or conviction, it is no part of their duty or interest, by enlightening igno-

rance and disabusing prejudice, to shake the foundation on which the maintenance of their own rule and supremacy so much depends."

"A sad state of mutual bondage," exclaimed St. Clair, "one hardly knows which to pity more—the master or the slave."

"Let us hope in all charity," observed Mrs. St. Clair, "that the blessed light of truth and conviction, revealed to all alike if they will but see, will at length leave *none* in darkness;—that that glorious epoch of universal emancipation from bondage and error—so clearly promised us that the wilfully blind alone can be in ignorance, will ere long dawn on the world, and, drawing all together into one bond of brotherly love and unity, there may be but *one* banner—*one* fold—*one* shepherd for us all."

"Amen—amen!" was the unanimous response.

"Yes, yes," said the Doctor, "that glorious day *will* assuredly dawn at last. We look back on the ages that have passed, and glance anxiously at the prospects of the future, and

it seems, for aught that we can observe, that that glorious epoch is yet far off; but are not a thousand years to man's finite perceptions infinitely of less import in the boundless calculations of futurity, than a grain of sand on the ocean shore?"

"True," replied St. Clair, "doubtless our best wisdom is, ever continuing ourselves staunch and faithful disciples of the one good cause, to be content to leave the rest to heaven's own time and pleasure. Above all, not to prejudice or bring reproach on the cause we would assist by ill judged enthusiasm or misdirected zeal, which, rest assured, have done it more harm and tended more to retard its progress than all the malice or machinations of its enemies."

"That I verily believe," accorded the Doctor,—"the fear is not for any lack, but for that dangerous *excess* of zeal which the slightest supposed necessity for its display will in a moment fan into a fever of extremes."

"You think such advocates as Phœbe are likely to do the cause more harm than good,

then," said Aunt Nel, seeing the boys getting fidgetty.

"Simply, yes," replied the Doctor, "they are its greatest foes:—while gratifying their vanity—by appearing conversant in matters of which they are profoundly ignorant, they are like an unskilful physician, who, in combating with symptoms, only fixes the root of the disease still deeper and firmer."

"Poor Phœbe!" condoled I, "she has had a sickener will last her for life. The good cause is not likely to be injured by any more of Phœbe's unskilfulness."

"Does she still persist in her opinion about the ghost?" asked the Doctor.

"As well talk to the winds," replied Aunt Nel, "as attempt to undeceive her."

"All the better," said the Doctor, "it will keep her tongue tied — don't sink the ghost, whatever you do."

"Don't *you* believe in ghosts, Doctor Rodolph?" eagerly demanded Fred; "I'm sure there must be such things;—ask Ninon—my mother saw one once, too, with her own eyes —didn't you, mother?"

"Let us talk of something else, my dear," advised that judicious parent.

"If mamma has seen a ghost with her own eyes, Fred," pursued the Doctor, arranging with the tongs some fresh logs that Ninon had just thrown on the fire, "why, ghosts there must be—that's certain."

"Do, dear mother, tell us the story of the Rookwood ghost.—The Doctor has never heard it," entreated Fred.

"Yes—yes! the Rookwood ghost," we all cried—"the Rookwood ghost!" and thus left with no alternative, Mrs. St. Clair,—holding tight in her lap the hand of her youngest boy Cecil, who sat on a hassock at her feet looking up intently into his mother's face with his eyes and mouth wide open, ready to swallow every word that fell from her lips—related the following most awful and unaccountable incident.

"Some years ago, being on a visit to a near relation at Rookwood in Oxfordshire, and not choosing, from slight indisposition, to make one of their *pic nic* fishing party to a

beautiful park lake some few miles off, I sallied forth, towards the close of the evening, to enjoy a solitary stroll round the extensive grounds and shrubberies of the old manor house.

Night was fast coming on; but the delicious coolness of the air, after a sultry August day, induced me to prolong my walk later than usual. For no assignable cause, I had been conscious all day of an unusual depression of spirits — a gloom had been hanging over my thoughts that I could neither account for nor shake off. An undefinable apprehension of approaching calamity — that mysterious foreshadowing of impending evil — those inexplicable 'hints and pressings of the mind,' as De Foe calls them, which, for aught we know, may be, as he says, 'the converse of spirits and the secret communication between the embodied and the unembodied,' permitted by Providence as warnings and preparatives—had haunted my imagination for some days past.

But I was determined no longer to give

way to such ridiculous phantasms, and was debating in my mind whether to proceed through a wicket at the extremity of the shrubbery that opened into a beautiful wood walk, and so, by a circuitous path gain the high road, by which I should probably meet my friends returning from their excursion, or retrace my steps to the house, when I thought I saw a tall white figure moving at a short distance among the trees.

I was not one to give way, generally speaking, to imaginary fears; but must own—my feelings, at this moment, were not very creditable to my courage and usual presence of mind, on which I piqued myself. Insensibly I quickened my steps as I heard the old turret clock toll nine. It was almost dark, and, in spite of all my fortitude, I felt my heart beating quicker and quicker, as, neither looking one way nor the other, I turned hastily down one of the more shaded alleys that led by a shorter cut than round the shrubbery to the house. Scarcely had I proceeded ten paces, when the same figure, white from head

to foot, crossed the path so close to me as almost to touch my dress.

Instinctively, as you may suppose, I started back, and the blood for a moment left my cheeks, I could feel, pale as marble; but it was but for a moment. Recovering, by an immense internal struggle, my self-possession, I moved on with a firm determined step, almost ashamed of the timidity I had been betrayed into; but had hardly reached the end of the avenue, when the spectral form of my unknown attendant again intercepted my progress, and, turning its head, regarded me for an instant with a look of deep and unutterable interest, and, waving its hand, vanished from my sight.

For a moment I stood as if transfixed, gazing in speechless horror on the spot from which the figure had disappeared. It was the apparition of my mother—my sole-surviving parent—my beloved mother!

I did not scream or faint away, as many would have done under a less appalling visitation. Somehow, I reached the house, and

at length, in my own room, threw myself on the bed in a state of mind much easier to be imagined than described. Not a wink of sleep closed my eyes that night: the spectral form of my beloved parent never quitted me. What, think you, must have been my horror, when the following morning's post brought me the intelligence of her sudden death? That I saw her apparition almost at the identical hour at which she was taken ill and died, I am as sure of as that I live. No one, not even Mr. St. Clair, can ever convince me to the contrary."

Now, after this, might not Phœbe and Ninon, whatever the Doctor might say, have seen a ghost as well as their mistress? most certainly. Even St. Clair himself—one of the most incredulous and tiresome men on these points that ever breathed, could not but acknowledge that the circumstances just related by his amiable lady were "very extraordinary."

The Doctor coughed, and rubbed his knee harder and harder; but was forced to admit,

that, "if ever there was a ghost on earth, that was one." For myself, as, when I am told a story of unusual interest, I make it a point not to be troubled with misgivings, by which I am a gainer every way, I would have challenged the best friend I had in the world to single combat who refused to accept as gospel every word that fell on this, as on every other occasion, from the lips of so trusty an authority as our hostess; and should have been seconded and supported, too — that I know for certain—not only by Aunt Nel, but by every other member of the family, one and all of whom were precisely of my opinion, that it is a piece of unpardonable presumption for any one to declare, because he has never seen a ghost himself, that no one else has, either.

"They don't seem to hold apparitions in much awe hereabouts," observed the Doctor, "as, with the exception of the old Bishop of Liége—whose spirit monopolizes these parts, and is generally esteemed a ghost of dangerous propensities, supernatural phœnomena of one sort or another are really of such con-

stant occurrence as to excite little surprise or interest. It is the death-light—the ominous *feu de mort*—the invariable precursor of death and disaster, that appears to inspire the greatest dread among the inhabitants of these mountains."

"Ah!" said I, "I have heard something of the same sort before;—it is a vivid fluttering light, about the size of your two hands, is it not? visible in the neighbourhood immediately preceding the occurrence of any domestic calamity."

"Yes — they say, invariably," replied the Doctor. "You all know silly Jacot, as they call him—the mad mendicant of Vaux, who gets his living by the *sous* he picks up from the visitors to Chèvremont?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the boys, "he startled Aunt Nel almost out of her wits the other day, by his sudden appearance before us out of a thicket on the mountain, with his face besmeared with dirt and red ochre, his dress all in tatters, and his hair hanging down his neck like another wild Orson of the woods."

"I take it, Jacot's more knave than fool," said St. Clair, "I caught him once, unperceived, arranging himself behind a bush as some ladies approached one of the shrines about the middle of the mountain, where he usually takes his stand."

"No doubt, he knows a *cent* from a *sous*," agreed the Doctor, "but there's no question he is clean daft—is poor Jacot."

"Was he born an idiot?" asked I.

"Oh, no! up to the age of manhood Jacot was as sound-headed as any of his neighbours; when he married, they say, one of the prettiest *demoiselles* of Vaux, and drove a thriving business at his trade of a *cordonnier*. A few days before Madame Jacot's expected confinement, having received a fright from a pig, that, escaping from the butcher, ran into her cottage and knocked her down, she was taken to her bed, and, brain fever ensuing, little hopes were left of her life. A night or two after, Jacot was sitting melancholy enough over his solitary cup of coffee—musing over his affliction, for he loved his wife to

distraction, when, rushing down stairs in her night-clothes, she threw herself into a chair opposite to him, and continued to stare at him with her eyes fixed and her elbows resting on the table between them; till, Jacot, making an effort to overcome the agitation that had set him trembling from head to foot, she suddenly started up as she saw him approaching her, and rushing up stairs again with a frantic scream that might have been heard all over the village, threw herself on the floor in a paroxysm of raving madness. Jacot, well nigh distracted himself, after calling in his neighbours to keep watch in his absence, ran headlong across an adjoining meadow for the doctor, till, coming to a stile over which he must get to reach the lane in which his house was situated — there, sure enough, on the top rail—dancing in ghastly vividness before his eyes, was the fearful death-light—the resistless *feu de mort*. Jacot saw no more, but, falling prostrate, there he lay for some time unconscious; till, not returning with the doctor, search was made, and he was

found lying groaning on his face. He never beheld his wife again alive. From that day his senses forsook him — since when, he has depended for existence on the charity of his neighbours, and what he can collect by begging on the mountain."

"I should not like to meet Jacot," observed Mrs. St. Clair, "in a lonely spot after nightfall—there is something always, to me, peculiarly forbidding in his look."

"Rest assured," acquiesced St. Clair, "he finds it to his account to make himself as frightful as possible. I never saw a more villanous face."

"I am inclined to think, myself," assented Aunt Nel, "that Jacot's manœuvres earn him more *sous* than his misfortunes."

"He will lose nothing, at all events," said I, "for want of importunity."

"He was never accused but once," continued the Doctor, "of any attempt at intimidation — that certainly was rather a serious affair."

"What was that?" asked I.

"About two years ago, at the close of a summer's evening, a young English lady and her brother—a boy about Fred's age, from Chaudfontaine, having lingered till almost dusk on the mountain top, to complete a pencil sketch of the little chapel for a friend in England to whom she desired to send it by the next day's post, were hastily retracing their way down the steep descent that—Heavens!" cried the Doctor—stopping short, as the hall-door was loudly slammed to, and footsteps were heard hurriedly approaching the room in which we were sitting—what now?"—

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when open flew the door, and pale and almost breathless with affright, in rushed Ninon.

"Ninon, Ninon! what's the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, turning pale as ashes —"what's the matter?"

"Is the girl bewitched?" thundered St. Clair, rising from his seat, and looking considerably perplexed, as well he might be—"speak—speak—you simpleton!"

"The ghost—the ghost!" faltered Ninon, as soon as she could articulate.

"The fiddlestick!" exclaimed St. Clair—"the girl's bewitched."

"Nay, hear her," interposed I.

"I am not bewitched," indignantly persisted Ninon, fire flashing from her eyes, "I saw it enter the cave—I did—or, may the Mother of Jesus!"—

"Zounds, then!" cried St. Clair, "we'll teach his ghostship to come, spoiling the punch a second time;—come along—come along!" and putting a light to a bull's-eye lantern that stood in the passage—while the Doctor, seeing me arm myself with a cricket-bat, seized his scarlet umbrella, in which, I verily believe, he put more confidence than all the *fusils* in Xendom, out we sallied, followed by the whole party—Ninon bringing up the rear, to the dreaded cave.

"Now then, we've got you, Mr. Ghost," cried St. Clair, turning on the light; when, in an instant the whole cave was in a blaze; and, ye powers of mercy! struggling up the

steep ivy-tangled bank adjoining, with desperate haste to avoid discovery, a human figure bearing an unmistakeable resemblance—Heavens! who will ever believe it? to our next door neighbour—the young Chevalier Furiosus, was painfully perceptible, in spite of every effort, making good his inglorious retreat. Mrs. St. Clair threw up her arms, too much astounded to find vent for her amazement, by which, fortunately for Furiosus, she upset the light. Alice gave a faint scream and clung to her father's coat-tail. "Stole away!" cried I, at the top of my lungs—the Doctor joining in chorus with a shrill whistle, which made the welkin ring again—while, Aunt Nel and St. Clair bursting out laughing—"Shoulder arms—right about, face!" bawled Fred, and off we marched with flying colours—the Doctor's chocolate silk *mouchoir* tied to the ferrule of his scarlet *parapluie*, fluttering in the breeze, like conquering heroes, to our posts.

Various and contradictory were the surmises, as may be supposed, that this adven-

ture gave rise to during the evening. Nothing could persuade Mrs. St. Clair but that the sly young fox came poaching after her chicken, and, in corroboration of this not impossible view of the case, produced a scrap of paper that she had picked up near the cave some few days before, on which was written—in elegant French, the concluding stanza of a well known native air, which, liberally translated, means, as near as need be,

"Meet me by moonlight alone."

The Doctor declined giving any positive opinion, as, "situated as he then was with respect to his betrothed, he had no wish to be too hard on his rival."

For myself and Aunt Nel, "we wouldn't listen to any such rubbish."

St. Clair, in spite of Miss Alice's blushes which the production of the tender fragment had seemed to call forth, inclined to the belief—that the young Chevalier might have sought the cave with the most innocent intentions—perhaps, to cull, by moonlight, some

fresh specimens for their next botanical lecture; while, Alice herself warmly insisted, and in which she was supported by the boys, that Furiosus was neither studious nor amatory:—"it was evident now," she said, "who stole the apricots."

As for Ninon, like Phœbe, in spite of all we could ever say to the contrary, she never would be prevailed on to believe but that she had seen, with her own eyes, a ghost—a real ghost—and nothing but a ghost.

Having exhausted the mirth that this second nocturnal adventure had so unexpectedly thrown us into, drawn again round the fire in a snug semi-circle, replenished the whisky bowl, and, to shew that we bore no malice, drunk a bumper all round to the health, long life, and happiness of the ghost, a general demand was made for Aunt Nel's story; whereupon, that most perfect pattern of her sex in my eyes — (I don't care who the other may be) — after the usual little coquettish preludes, for which there wasn't the slightest necessity, added considerably

to our pleasure by the following pathetic little narrative of The Creole of Antigua; the Doctor having been first bound down by a faithful promise to Fred — to wind up with the finale of the young English lady's formidable encounter with Jacot on the mountain.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THE story of Marion," began Aunt Nel, "and the reflections it called forth on the morally degraded state of the majority of the Belgian domestics, who, as a class it must be admitted, are hardly to be excelled for ignorance, idleness, duplicity or ingratitude, brought forcibly to my recollection, at the moment, a little tale of beautiful fidelity and attachment on the part of a poor uneducated Creole slave towards his young master, for the veracity of which I can freely vouch, and which seemed to me to contrast finely with such heartless and unprincipled characters as Marion and Baptiste, which, terribly black as they may appear to those

unacquainted with the like, are nevertheless pictures too true to nature, and to be met with, even at the present day, a great deal too often.

Well then, many years ago, long before Negro emancipation was much more than dreamed of in the Caribbees; when slave keeping was as much part and parcel of West Indian enterprize and cupidity as the cultivation of the sugar-cane or cotton-tree, there lived at Antigua, an English proprietor of considerable wealth and consequence named De Morgan, the largest slave owner of any of the smaller islands between Porto Rico and Barbadoes. His lady, a beautiful but delicate woman—who had gone out with him from England to take possession of the estate on his accession to it at the death of his father, falling an early victim to the unhealthiness of the climate, left him a widower before the age of thirty, with an only child—a boy of great beauty and promise; and so centred were all his affections ever after in this sole pledge of their mutual love, that, although he might

have commanded the hand of one of the richest West Indian heiresses of a neighbouring island, nothing could ever induce De Morgan to marry again—his life and all its energies should henceforth, he declared, be wholly and exclusively devoted to one object—the education and aggrandizement of his boy.

As will naturally enough be supposed, it was not his father's nor his attendants' fault, if, as Master Lionel grew up, he was not as thoroughly spoilt a boy, as self-willed and ungovernable a youth, and, in good time, as big a tyrant of a man, as West Indian discipline ever turned out. Surrounded from his cradle by every luxury and indulgence that could well tend to cramp the understanding and vitiate the heart; unrestrained license allowed him to think and act just as passion or caprice might instigate; with slaves at his call to anticipate his every wish, to spare him the necessity of any personal effort, either of mind or body, to pamper every appetite and pander to every vanity, would it surprise any one, if, when Lionel arrived at manhood, he

was as fair a specimen of bloated ignorance, selfishness, and despotism, as absolute self-will and gratification ever produced? But, no such thing! Lionel, with all his father's grace of features and person, and quite as much of his pride and ambition, for which latter qualities Mr. De Morgan seemed to have generally been more feared than loved, had his mother's heart and disposition. This saved him; this it was that carried him safe and sound through the temptations and dangers by which his youth was surrounded, and but for which, when he became his own master, he would probably have been little better than a misery to himself, and a curse and torment to every one around him.

Now, the inheritance of his mother's sweetness of temper and gentleness of heart, although it might appear to detract from his qualifications as a slave master, in the estimation of those who deem the main requisites for successful slave rule to consist in the absence of all sympathy and consideration for the ruled, was unquestionably the fairest le-

gacy that excellent parent could have bequeathed him, and served to fix him in the affections of his people better than all his father's wealth or influence. As Lionel grew up, it was easy to foresee in what would be secured the triumph of *his* reign—not in the abject fears or slavish servitude of his subjects, but in their voluntary, unfettered allegiance to his princely worth and virtues. About twelve months after Mrs. De Morgan's death, when Lionel was between two and three years old, the fame of a beautiful half cast girl of one of the Marquesas Islands—Dominica, I believe, of whose extraordinary charms report spoke in the highest terms, travelled so far and fast, as soon to reach the ears of Mr. Malcolm Crofts—Mr. De Morgan's chief agent or bailiff, a gentleman known for his keen appreciation of all that was lovely and rare.

Whether it was that female beauty, after Mr. Malcolm Croft's refined taste, was not so common a commodity in the Western Isles as in his own more favoured native land, or

that he had become luxuriously fastidious and discontented, there is no knowing; but nothing, apparently, put him into such a fidget as the rumour of a pretty face or figure within a radius of any come-atable distance. He would have gone any day, they say, fifty miles to see a handsome woman, and existed almost for six months afterwards on her smile. No wonder, therefore, if the celebrity of such charms as Rhoda Bell's was a temptation too strong to be resisted by such an enthusiastic amateur as Mr. Malcolm Crofts. So, under pretence of having business to transact among his neighbours, which would probably detain him some days from home, off he set on his voyage of discovery, having fully made up his mind to leave no artifice untried, (the reality agreeing with the representation) to secure such a treasure among the list of his employer's possessions, and, if she was as tractable as fair, to extend to her a corresponding share of his countenance and patronage.

How this accomplished tactician went to work, after having satisfied himself that ru-

mour had done no more than justice to the charming Rhoda—what baits he used, what irresistible inducements held out, to silence her scruples and encourage her to trust for promotion to his guidance and protection, can only be a matter of conjecture, but, sure enough, she at last consented to the terms proposed—took leave of her friends, and, accompanied by a Negro woman whom Crofts had easily persuaded by some small presents, and the promise of further favours, to be her companion, set out with him on her journey to Antigua.

Triumphantly beat his heart as he entered his rightful dominions; for Malcolm Crofts on his own dunghill was a cock that while he could, would crow, and set about the necessary preparations for the disposal of his prize under his own immediate inspection. So far success had crowned his plans—nothing could be more promising; and would Rhoda but have rewarded him for all his interest and anxiety in her welfare—with one sweet smile, such as no eyes could better, if it suited them,

bestow, he would have esteemed himself indeed a happy man.

But whether thoughts of home hung as yet heavy on Rhoda's heart, or whether, if she had a heart at all, other objects occupied it; or Malcolm Crofts with all his blandishments lacked the magic power to inspire her with a due sense of his manifold attractions, certain it is—Rhoda had hitherto made a very indifferent visible return, whatever she might feel, for all the kindnesses with which her patron had loaded her.

Meanwhile, the news of Rhoda's arrival on the estate having reached Mr. De Morgan's ears—he desired that she might be brought to him, that he might form his own judgment of her merits, which seemed to have thrown the whole Island into a ferment of admiration. With evident reluctance did Malcolm Crofts receive this order and depart to obey it—but there was no help for it—De Morgan was not a man to be practised on. The day following, his beautiful slave was led by Malcolm into his presence. From that hour his hopes, if

ever worth a straw, received their death-blow. It was evident Rhoda's bright eyes and bewitching smiles had captivated her master. There was no time to be lost:—determined to make a last effort, no sooner had she reached her home, than throwing himself on his knees before her, and avowing the tender passion that consumed him, poor Malcolm, in the excitement of the moment and the fear of losing her for ever, actually offered her his hand as well as heart.

It was not to be—entreaties, professions, promises, threats, were all alike fruitless—Rhoda was inexorable—not even the honour of becoming Mrs. Malcolm Crofts had power to shake her resolution, and poor Malcolm, crest-fallen and down-hearted, was doomed once again in his life—to chew the cud of his own self-sought mortification and defeat.

Time passed, and Malcolm, finding all further hope of inspiring a tender throb in Rhoda's breast for him, utterly extinguished, contented himself, as he best might, with cursing his own folly, and turning his thoughts, with

many an imprecation on the head of the poor slave, to other worthier objects.

Meanwhile, Rhoda Bell continued to rise rapidly in the good graces of her lawful master. Evil hour was it for Rhoda when Satan tempted her to refuse to become Mrs. Crofts, or Mrs. anybody else, rather than the recipient of such distinctions as now made her the talk and envy of the whole island:—but Rhoda was one of those thoroughly unprincipled persons that care little by what steps they rise to fame, provided they can out-distance others, and luxuriate in a plentiful harvest of present emoluments. She would have sold her soul to Lucifer, to be exempt from labour—to eat, drink, and sleep to her heart's content, and flaunt it on parade in every colour of the rainbow.

It was easy enough to foresee what must be the end of such an unenviable ambition; nor could the too evident interest with which Mr. De Morgan regarded the advent, in course of time, of a good-looking, curly-headed young urchin under Rhoda's roof, for which she

evinced the utmost maternal solicitude, be attributed to other than its true cause.

But, partial as he was at first to the young Peter, and studiously attentive to the comforts and convenience of his mother, not in the remotest degree was diminished his all-absorbing love for the best and most beloved of all his treasures—his brave and beautiful boy, Lionel:—nay, as the young Creole grew up, Mr. De Morgan's liking for him, so far from keeping pace with his former manifestations of regard, or the poor fellow's merits, (for a worthier creature never was born under an ill-omened star than Peter) became daily colder and colder, till, at last, for no other assignable reason than that the presence of the unfortunate lad put him too much in mind of things which he would fain have driven, no doubt, for ever, from his thoughts, it settled, from indifference and neglect, into positive harshness and aversion.

Not slow was the keen and watchful eye of Rhoda to notice this change, and terrible were the secret conflicts her maternal feelings

underwent, as almost every day brought some fresh instance of impatience or ill-usage on the part of the father of her child. But she stifled her complaints; till, one day, Peter returning to her in a most pitiable condition from a severe chastisement he had just received at the hands of Malcolm Crofts—with the knowledge and approval, as she supposed, of Mr. De Morgan, she vowed, with a terrible imprecation, that, "she would have her revenge, if she died for it."

One night, when all the Island was, or ought to have been, hushed in sleep, a sudden cry of alarm was heard in the direction of Malcolm Croft's dwelling — "fire — fire — murder — help—help—help!" but, alas! too late: the wind blowing in an adverse direction, the flames soon spread to the adjoining outhouses, and in less than two hours that comfortable homestead was one mass of ruin and confusion. Not the least pitiable object was Malcolm himself, running about from place to place, almost in a state of nudity—half frenzied with terror and consternation—in the at-

tempt to save some part of his goods and chattels from the cruel destroyer; but in vain: not a vestige was left: even his far-famed collection of the "Beauties of the Western Isles," to form which had been the labour and delight of his life, shared the common fate: all was swept away, and Malcolm Crofts all of a moment turned out, as it were, naked and forlorn, to begin life again. And all for what?—because of his irresistible infatuation for bright eyes and dimpled cheeks. Poor Malcolm! he is not the first, by many, that has paid dearly for indiscriminate devotion to the fair sex.

Wrapped in impenetrable mystery that defied all investigation, remained the origin of this frightful calamity; whether the result of accident or design, there was no clue to lead to a discovery; and many a smile of savage delight passed over Rhoda Bell's face, as, turning from the harrowing contemplation of the deep marks of the scourge on her boy's neck and shoulders, she thought—how terribly, how signally, she had been avenged!

Little dreamed Peter of the dark thoughts that were passing in his mother's mind; but the work of revenge was not yet completed—another sacrifice—far more dreadful than Malcolm's atonement, had yet to be made, before its fiendish thirst could be satiated.

It happened, about this time, that their young master, Lionel, who, possessing all his mother's virtues, inherited, likewise, much of the delicacy of her constitution, lay ill with fever—brought on by a violent cold caught from exposure to the weather during a boat excursion—to witness the capture of an enormous shark that had been seen several times within a short distance of the shore, evidently on the look out for anything that might fall in his way; till, having carried off a negro boy, while bathing; a resolute little party undertook the hazardous attempt to rid the Island of the monster; and nothing would satisfy Lionel but that he should make one in the expedition, and be an eye-witness to its destruction; but, all in vain—every allurement to entice the enemy to close quarters

was ineffectual—he seemed to have an instinctive anticipation of their designs, and to set at nought all their affectionate endeavours to provide for his gratification; so that, weary of their unsuccessful pursuit, they returned no wiser than they set out, determined to defer the chase till some more favourable opportunity.

But it had been an unfortunate affair for their young master; for, exposed to the rain, that continued to fall without ceasing during the greater part of the day—a violent cold was the consequence, followed by intermittent fever, that almost drove his father distracted with apprehension.

For several weeks Lionel lay in a state of great danger, during which Peter was his constant and indefatigable attendant. He would be waited on by no one but his good, faithful, affectionate Peter: from his hands alone would he receive his food and medicine, and never seemed at rest unless Peter was by his side, to shift his pillow, or tell him tales, or sing him to sleep.

Mr. De Morgan, seeing the fondness of his beloved child for the poor Creole, and that his recovery depended on humouring his wishes as far as possible, although the presence of the poor lad was a never failing source of disquiet to his feelings, so far smothered his unnatural repugnance as to treat him, for the time being, with unusual consideration, and to bestow on him repeated marks of his favour and gratitude. That he could place the utmost confidence in Peter's zeal and fidelity, he well knew,—feel any affection for him he did not; nay, loathed the sight of the unoffending, uncomplaining, generous-hearted creature, who would have willingly laid down his life, if called on, for his sake, merely because, in his tenderness for self, he lacked the honest courage to be just. Next to his mother, Peter loved his young master more than all the world besides. So many evidences of pure regard and compassion had he received at his hands—so often had he stood his friend and advocate, encouraged and assisted him in his daily tasks, warded off by

his intercession the impending punishment; cheered him in labour, been his instructer in their leisure hours, his companion, and confidant, and counsellor, that no wonder his heart yearned with deepest attachment towards one—whom he regarded as a ministering angel of all that was good, and generous, and wise.

And no less did Lionel's heart warm towards the poor Creole. From his earliest years he had ever felt for Peter a peculiar sympathy, for which he could hardly account, further than that he seemed to him to have qualifications so far superior to any other of his father's people, and, therefore, was deserving of proportionate esteem. As he grew up, these qualifications assumed such prepossessing features in the noble fellow's character, and were so in harmony with Lionel's own turn of mind, that an almost brotherly confidence and affection took root between them, and it was soon evident to every one—that if the poor neglected lad met with less than the common laws of justice and humanity demanded from the father, he had more than

ample indemnification for all sorrows and sacrifices in the overflowing compensations heaped on him by the kindness of the son.

If Mr. De Morgan, beholding, as he did with no little jealousy, these evidences of growing attachment, took little pains to interfere in his son's pursuits and inclinations, it was that he relied on a final check being put to them by the total separation that must soon take place, when Lionel went to England for the completion of his education. On this thought he built his trust, resolved that, as soon as his boy was gone, he would put into execution a scheme he had long contemplated for the future disposal and provision of Peter and his mother, so as to free himself from all further uneasiness on their account; till when, he was content that matters should take their usual course.

Peter, therefore, continued to watch unceasingly by the bed-side of his charge; but slow and doubtful was his young master's recovery. Even if he rallied from this attack, his doctors began to express doubts whether

his constitution had not suffered an irreparable shock, and must not eventually give way, unless something effectual was done to arrest the progress of the inward fever that consumed him. Mr. De Morgan was almost frantic at the thought—what would all his wealth and power be worth, if the only object for which he lived was taken from him? Peter treasured up the doctor's words in his heart, and, running to his mother, whose knowledge of herbs, and skill in their preparation and adaptation to medicinal purposes had often gained her considerable fame, poured out the fears and anguish of his soul on the bosom of his parent, and besought her to exert her powers for the sake of their beloved young master.

"Thy father, Peter," replied Rhoda, in language best understood between herself and child, while a deep flush of shame and rage passed over her dark brow—"thy father deserves no sympathy from me—he is perjured and faithless—what is Lionel De Morgan to me?"

"He is the soul of truth, and honour, and justice!" exclaimed Peter, throwing himself on his knees—"dear, dear mother! thou canst rescue him from the great destroyer, if thou wilt; wondrous is thy skill—O, save him—I implore thee, save him!"

"That he may one day treat thee like a dog, poor child, as does his father, eh?" replied Rhoda, bitterly, and dashing away the tears that coursed each other down her wan cheeks—no, no—that must not be."

"Never!" cried Peter—"he is too noble, too just, too generous!"

"He is a De Morgan—rich, powerful, proud—not a child of sin and sorrow; what art thou, poor boy? Mark thy mother's words! if he live to know who and what thou art—he will some day spurn thee from him like a mangy hound—no, no! that may not—shall not be!"

"Thou wrongest the noblest, gentlest heart that ever beat;" exclaimed Peter, wringing his hands in an agony of anxiety—by Heaven, thou dost! All say—that he is in nothing

but features like his father; but the image in heart and disposition of his angelic mother—now a saint of light."

"Well—well," muttered Rhoda, after a few moments of deep thought—"it shall be even as thou wilt; but remember, if evil come of it, 'twas not of my seeking."

Peter threw himself for joy into his mother's arms. "There is no time to lose, dear mother," said he.

"'Twill be ready by sunset," replied Rhoda—"come to me then, and thou shalt have that which never failed:—but, hark-ye, not a word, as thou wouldst have my blessing.—And now, God be with thee, poor child! go, go—or thy absence may create surprise."

With a reeling brain, and heart bounding with hope and exultation, back flew Peter to the sick chamber of his master, and kneeling by his couch with his face buried in his hands, while tears of gratitude rolled fast down his sun-burnt cheeks, he offered up a prayer of joy and thanks to Heaven, not the less blessed or hallowed in the eye of Him who under-

stands the meaning and motives of all man's inmost thoughts, because he knew not what he asked.

Impatiently did Peter count the hours till the sun, sinking in the horizon, told him the joyful moment had arrived for the accomplishment of the hope nearest and dearest to his heart; and, leaving his charge to the care of a faithful domestic of Mr. De Morgan's during his absence, off he flew again at his utmost speed to his mother's cottage.

Rhoda, pale and care-worn, an unearthly fire in her eyes, and her whole frame agitated beyond her power to disguise, met him at the porch.

Peter started, as the livid cheeks and quivering lips of his mother caught his anxious gaze. "What is the matter, dear mother —art thou ill?" demanded he, affectionately, and imprinting a kiss on her cold forehead, "Thou hast fatigued thyself too much in thy anxiety for our dear young master; but the great Being will sustain and reward thee, dear mother."

"Take it," replied Rhoda, drawing a small

phial with trembling hand from her bosom, "less than twenty drops will suffice; but first swear to me, boy, by the sun, and moon, and stars, that thou wilt never breathe to living soul that Rhoda—thy mother, had hand in this day's work; for thy sake—poor, fond, foolish, forsaken child!—she has made this sacrifice."

"I swear!" cried Peter.

"Enough," said Rhoda, "and now beware no eye observes thee while thou administerest this precious elixir, or its virtues are for ever lost."

"No eye but God's shall see," rapturously exclaimed Peter, grasping the phial, and concealing it carefully beneath his dress; and once more throwing his arms round the neck of his parent, and receiving her blessing, in a few minutes he was again alone by the bedside of his patient.

"I am thirsty, Peter," murmured Lionel, waking presently from a long and refreshing sleep, "give me to drink—I feel much better to-day."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Peter, clapping his

hands, and hardly able to contain himself for delight, "you will want no more doctors—no more nasty medicines—Massa Lionel will be quite well to-morrow," and concealing himself, as he thought, from observation behind a screen, in obedience to his mother's injunctions, hastily drew the phial from his bosom, and, with exulting eye and shaking hand, was dropping some of its contents into some lemonade, when, Mr. De Morgan, who had heard the clapping of hands from an adjoining apartment, and fearing so unseemly a noise might disturb the slumbers of his child, stole softly to the door of his chamber, and entering unperceived by Peter—whose whole attention was engrossed on what he was about—stood for a moment watching, by the aid of a large looking glass, the movements of his slave; till, a dreadful suspicion of the truth seeming to flash across his mind, he sprung forward, caught the hand that held the fatal phial in his iron grasp, and, gaining possession of it—"vile wretch!" cried he, "what hellish villany is this?"

Peter, dumb-struck and confounded at the thought of his irreparable misfortune, as he conceived it, stood with his head sunk on his chest, his eyes fixed on vacancy, and his arms folded, as if stupified and conscience-stricken; nor could he reply otherwise than with low moans and overwhelmed looks to the terrible accusations and menaces now heaped on him by his enraged master.

"Accursed hound!" vociferated De Morgan, as Malcolm Crofts and others came running in, in answer to his calls,—"is this the return made me for all my confidence and kindness — this thy vaunted fidelity and attachment?"

"Nay, father," interposed Lionel, "hear him: my life for it, he is not guilty of the dreadful crime laid to his charge. I will not believe it — I will not, till I hear it from his own lips:—speak, Peter—I command—I implore thee, speak!"

The eyes of the poor slave met the gaze of his young master, with a piteous expression in which was no trace of guilt or guile; his

chest heaved with the tremendous emotions by which his whole frame was agitated—he seemed as if he would speak, but that something choked his utterance—the recollection of his vow again recurred to him—and, uttering a deep groan, he fell sobbing and moaning with his face on the earth.

"Out with him!" cried De Morgan, "to gaol with the miscreant!"

"He is guilty—he cannot deny it," approved Malcolm Crofts, with whom Peter was never a favourite.

"Nor is this his first crime, perhaps," insinuated De Morgan, "I always had my suspicions about the fire, Mr. Crofts."

"My God!" ejaculated Malcolm, as if suddenly enlightened, "true—true—seize him—off with him—to gaol—to gaol!"

"Poor Peter!" sighed Lionel, as they hurried him away, "there is some unexplained mystery in all this,"—and sunk back exhausted on his pillow.

Consigned to his dungeon, poor Peter, after the first shock had somewhat subsided,

had ample time for reflecting on the painful circumstances that had brought him there; nor can it be supposed, when the result of the medical investigation of the contents of the phial was made known to him, but that the whole extent and purpose of his mother's guilt appeared to his bewildered senses in its fullest and most fearful light. But he had bound himself to that mother, towards whom his heart still yearned with fondest love, in spite of the horror with which the contemplation of her implacable enmity towards his master's house filled him, by a solemn vow, and nothing—not death itself, nor even eternal dishonour, which to his thoughts was far more agonizing than a thousand deaths, should ever tempt him to forget that sacred pledge. And when his trial came, and the dread verdict of "guilty of an attempt to destroy the life of his young master by poison"—to cruelly murder the beloved being for whom he would have gladly laid down his life at any time rather than a hair of his head should be injured—was about to be pronounced—not a

word or gesture, incompatible with his vow, could even the terrors of impending ignominy wring from him.

But it was not the purpose of Heaven that Peter should fall a victim to his magnanimity, or that the guilty should longer go unpunished; for no sooner did the intelligence reach Rhoda that the last sentence of the law was about to be delivered, which would condemn her child to perpetual banishment and shame, than, the feelings of the mother overcoming all other considerations, she rushed with frantic impetuosity through the crowds that opposed her progress into the body of the court, and throwing herself at the feet of the judge, made a full confession of her crimes. Corroborative circumstances placing the guilt of the mother, and the perfect innocence of the son beyond doubt, justice was vindicated. Rhoda laid her head that night on the dungeon pallet; and Peter, honorably—triumphantly acquitted, found the only solace for his woes in the sympathy and commiseration of his young master—the only being now to whom

he could turn in his affliction for pity or consolation.

The following morning when the gaoler went to Rhoda's cell, she was a corpse—no doubt her skill in drugs and herbs having provided her with the means, carefully concealed about her person, to anticipate, should occasion ever call for their use, the executioner.

If Peter's acquittal was hailed with universal acclamations, no heart, we may rest assured, rejoiced at it more than Lionel De Morgan's; and from that hour a compact of mutual esteem and confidence was established between them, on a basis too firm for aught but death to shake.

Even Malcolm Crofts—extending the hand of reconciliation to the favourite, was free to admit that he had been premature in his judgment, but laid the blame to popular rumour, of which no man on earth, however he might affect to despise it, was more the slave than Malcolm Crofts.

Lionel's health rapidly improving, so as to leave no apprehensions of any constitutional

ill effects, his departure for England in a few weeks was now determined on, and all was bustle and preparation getting ready for the event.

That which seemed to give joy to every one else, struck a pang to Peter's heart which was soon visible in his dejected mien and care worn appearance—his spirits entirely forsook him—scarcely did he take food enough to support life, yet, no complaint escaped his lips; nay, he would try to smile and seem cheerful when Lionel talked to him of the grand sights and the wonderful doings he was going to be a witness of in his mother's country; and with his head turned away to conceal the tears that often chased each other down his cheeks, would listen with a breaking heart to the glowing recital of themes, to him only fraught with bitterness and despair; but though no murmur passed his lips, it was impossible altogether to conceal the gloom that weighed upon his spirits.

"What can I best do, Peter," said Lionel one evening, as they were sitting together on

the beach, a few days before his departure from the Island—"to prove my gratitude to you for all your kindnesses?"

Peter hung down his head—the tears were rolling down his face—his voice was choked—he made an effort to speak—Lionel perceived his emotion—

"I know what I will do," continued he, "I will procure your freedom, Peter; yes—yes—my father will refuse me nothing—and you shall have your own cottage, and some land—and can then marry pretty Rachel—and you will be so happy—and when I come back from England I will bring you so many beautiful things for your house, and you shall be my bailiff like Malcolm Crofts—and we shall never part again—and—"

"Peter no want freedom," impatiently sobbed the poor affectionate creature, "Peter no want to marry—Peter will always be slave to Master Lionel."

"I know, Peter, what your heart would say," replied Lionel, compassionately, "you would not that we should part—you would

go with me—and serve me fondly and faithfully in whatever climes I might wander—yes—yes, I know 'tis so—and were I my own master go you should—but I should have no need at present of your services in England; nay, they will send me to school, where we could not be together. You must not unman me with your regrets, Peter:—we shall enjoy many happy days together, yet—three years will soon slip away, and when I am my own master, and you my Malcolm Crofts—how happy we shall all be!"

Peter listened, while his young master talked, with downcast eyes and sinking heart. Three years seemed to him—three years of total separation from the only object that now made life supportable, a dreary void—too terrible to be contemplated; but he was too generous, by giving expression to his wretchedness, to damp the ardour or throw a cloud over the bright prospects of his patron. As the hour of separation drew nearer and nearer, he even appeared to become more cheerful, and to have made up his mind to bear with patience and resignation that which

no doubt his good sense told him was for the best interest and eventual happiness of them both.

Well, at last the dreaded day came for Lionel to say farewell—to bid adieu to the home of his birth—to all, indeed, that his heart loved or cared for on earth. The vessel that was to bear him away stood off a short distance from the Island;—a favourable breeze had sprung up, and she was to sail that afternoon.

The signal was given.—"Farewell! then, for the last time, all. Farewell! dear father!" "Farewell! my beloved boy—a parent's blessing go with thee." "Adieu, dear friends and neighbours all; and farewell, too, my poor fond generous, faithful Peter!—let us only think of the happy day when we shall meet again oh, adieu — adieu! Thy freedom — is it not obtained? nay, sadden not the last moments thus: — be happy — for Lionel's sake be happy."

Standing apart from the shouting throng collected from all sides to witness the departure of their young master, Peter remained for

some minutes riveted, and following with dizzy brain and agonized gaze the little bark, that, receding from the shore as fast as four lusty arms could impel her, shot away through the calm blue waters towards the proud ship that was rocking lazily in the offing; till, suddenly, as if impelled by some resistless impulse, he was seen to run with the rapidity of lightning towards a small creek that brought him much nearer the object of his soul's longing, and, plunging into the waves, to be endeavouring to make his way, as speedily as expert swimming could take him, to the boat that contained his heart's best and only treasure, no doubt hoping, that, if he could but reach it, Lionel could never refuse such a last irresistible appeal to his sympathy and protection.

He had reached to within a hundred yards of the boat, without any of the crew apparently being aware of his approach, when, suddenly disappearing, a cry of horror rent the air from the assembled multitude on the shore. The next moment his black head was again visible for an instant above the flood.

"The shark — the shark!" yelled a hundred voices—and the blood-stained waters closed for ever over the poor Creole.

Long and anxiously did they pace the shore for many days, in the hope that the tide would bring in some vestige of the unfortunate Peter—to be preserved as a relic and memento of his melancholy end, but without success. Not a heart on the island, that knew his worth, but sorrowfully and sincerely bewailed his loss; and soon, on a green hillock in the rear of Mr. De Morgan's garden —a favourite spot of Lionel's—was erected, by his special request, a little monument to the memory of his faithful slave — as a just tribute of respect for his rare fidelity and attachment; where it is now still standing, if the unsparing ravages of time have not swept it to oblivion."

"Poor Peter!" we all exclaimed, after Aunt Nel had acknowledged, with becoming modesty, the compliments I couldn't find it otherwise than in my heart to heap on her for the pleasure she had just afforded us.

"Poor Peter! he deserved a better fate."

"Indeed, did he!" echoed the Doctor—"I love a tale of true worth and fidelity; it does one more good than a thousand instances of villany and ingratitude."

"True," responded St. Clair—"for the honour of human nature it should be ever thus—which is not so utterly black, thank God! as she is sometimes painted, and is ever best studied on her brightest side."

"And no eye or heart so depraved," pursued the Doctor, "but in secret, if not openly, does honour to the contemplation of goodness—no greater homage, I take it, can be paid to virtue."

"But the wretch, Rhoda," interrupted Alice and Fred—"to plot harm against the only friend that was kind to her child—how cruel—how unnatural!"

"Yes," replied Aunt Nel—"nothing would seem more so; but characters such as Rhoda were by no means of rare occurrence among the Negro tribes, during the horrible continuance of the West India slave trade; who, after giving evidence of the strongest affections, and most unshaken fidelity, in return

for kindnesses and favours, could be fearfully revengeful and implacable, to the last degree, under the impulse of anger or resentment."

"Yes, yes"—continued the Doctor, "the spirit of revenge, like that of avarice, knows no bounds to its devilish excesses. Some things that, if related in sober narrative, would appear little better than gross exaggerations or inconsistencies, are, nevertheless, as those know very well who have seen any thing of life and travel, too often but too faithful representations of every day life; and, but that I fear you would all set me down as a rhodomontadist and romancer, I could relate an almost unexampled instance of fidelity and devotion, under circumstances of peculiar hardship, that happened when I was a youngster not half a league from my native village, that would suffice, if anything could, to show how the human heart actuated by entire purity of purpose, and supported and defended by pious faith and resolution, will come off victorious, though all the powers of evil seem leagued against it."

"Oh, do tell us, Doctor Rodolph," exclaimed the youngsters, eagerly, who would have sat up all night tale telling, if they might.

The truth is, and why conceal it? there is nothing like a story:—young, middle-aged, and old, we all have sometimes in our lives lent an eager ear to the story-teller. From infancy to second childhood it is pretty much the same. The little urchin that can barely toddle and hardly talk, does he not leave for a story, toys and games, and rush to his mother's knee—and will he not there sit and listen and linger enraptured, much longer than she can find breath to talk: and is not the last stage almost of the silver-haired grandfather—the garrulous old man—spent in recounting over and over again the tales of his boyhood? O yes! There is not a chubby young varlet twelve months weaned, not a young mother of two years' standing; not a nurse, nor uncle, nor aunt, nor grandfather, nor grandam but will bear me out, whatever some miserable middle-aged misanthropes may say, that there's no charm like a story.

For my own part I plead guilty, now fast going on for my sixth climacter, and having long ago cut my wise tooth — to retaining, in its full pristine keenness, all my boyish relish for story telling. I remember how I used to devour 'Old Daniel,' and 'The Children's Friend;' and later, what exquisite delight I found in the company of 'The Scottish Chiefs,' 'The Percy Anecdotes,' and those most wonderful of all wonders—'The Arabian Nights;' and how I used to love Uncle Archibald better than all my kinsfolk, because he never came without a new story book for me in his pocket, or setting us all glancing into the dark corners of the old oak library with his ghosts and hobgoblins—and to this day I don't know anything I love better, after the day's work is done, than to sit over a blazing pine wood fire, and a moderate glass of whisky punch, listening to such another as my little Doctor; to see whom by the ingle side, rubbing his knee and looking the picture of happiness and good humour, would do more, my dear Grumpy, to drive away the blues, than

all the specifics of Buchan or Morison put together. But of what earthly importance to the reader are my likings or dislikings?

"Do tell us all about it," urged Fred, and we all looked, if we did not say, as much.

The Doctor pulled out his watch—not one of those dandy little affairs hardly bigger than a shilling, that gentlemen now sport in a thumb pocket over the region of the heart; but a good sensible, weighty old-fashioned double-cased repeater; not quite as large as a warming-pan, but ponderous enough to be in correct keeping with a handsome solid gold ring chain and seals, that Sir Robert himself might have been proud of.

"Eleven o'clock, as I'm a German," said he—addressing Fred, and looking very grave, as he always did when he had to tear himself from his cozy corner—"another day, my boy—'twill not spoil, Fred, for keeping, that I'll promise you."

"But," urged Fred, "you *promised* to tell us the rest of the English young lady's adventure with Jacot on the mountain."

"Yes, yes!" insisted St. Clair—"you don't stir from that spot, Doctor, till you've told us all about it, if we don't go to bed till morning."

"Zounds! then, I'd better be quick about it; so, let me see, where was I?"

"They had just left the little Chapel of Notre Dame," reminded Aunt Nel, "on their return home."

"Ah, now I recollect," continued the Doctor. "Seeing the evening fast drawing in, Miss Elmslie and her brother Maurice, instead of descending the mountain by the more frequented public approach from Vaux, thought, by taking a shorter cut down its side by a narrow zigzag footpath cut through the thick shrubs by which it is densely clothed, as you know, nearly over its whole surface, and which, but for your knowledge of its whereabouts, seems at a distance of even ten yards, an impervious and impassable thicket, to reach the high road along the mountain's foot by a much nearer route than round by the bridge through H——. They had got

about midway down, Maurice laughing and enjoying the perplexity of his less adventurous companion, to keep good her footing and save her dress from the brambles and briers that, sometimes almost choking up the path, seemed to defy any further progress, when suddenly the figure of a man of most forbidding aspect—his patched garments hanging about him in tatters, his neck and chest quite bare, a long grizzly beard starting from his chin, his face haggard and besmeared, and his hair falling in filthy and matted disorder down his shoulders, leaped from behind some bushes, and confronting Miss Elmslie, as one not likely to be said "no" to, '*Charité—charité—pour l'amour de la Viérge,*' muttered he.

Miss Elmslie, by all accounts, was by no means deficient in courage—and Maurice, they say, was a regular little bantam of the true English breed; but such an apparition at such a time and such a lonely spot might well have inspired the stoutest hearts with apprehension.

Hastily drawing a franc piece from her

pocket, she dropped it into Jacot's hat, and, supposing she had now paid toll enough to entitle her to free passage, endeavoured to pass on; when throwing out his arms, and using the most horrible gestures, poor Miss Elmslie found herself a prisoner.

"For the love of heaven!" said she, hardly able to stand for terror, "what is it you want? here—here is more money—take it all—I have no more—I pray you, let us pass," and once again catching Maurice by the hand, she made another effort to escape. But Jacot was not to be so easily eluded. His mad fit—which they say pays him occasional visits, was on him. With a wild shout that made the echoes ring again, he rushed on his defenceless victim, and throwing his arms round her, was about to lift her like a child from the earth and carry her exultingly away, Heaven knows where, probably, he knew not himself, when Maurice—his English blood up, young as he was, and driven to fury by the screams of his sister, sprung like a tiger at the throat of her assailant, and catching him by the hair,

tugged and tore and buffetted and kicked, till, losing his hold of his fair prize, Jacot turned savagely on the boy, and seizing him by the neck with both hands, in spite of Miss Elmslie's shrieks, hurled him with all his force some distance into the thicket, and was preparing for a fresh attack, when sounds of approaching voices caught his ear, and with a horrid howl off he scampered up the mountain, and was seen no more.

Poor Maurice recovering from his fright, beyond which he had happily sustained but little injury, soon rejoined his sister; and making the best of their way, fortunately arrived safe and sound at home, cured no doubt of ever wandering again for pastime about the mountains after sunset."

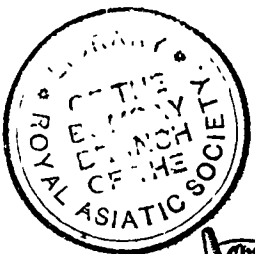
"But Jacot," demanded Mrs. St. Clair, "surely he did not escape with impunity?"

"Beyond a complaint to the Burgomaster, which ended I fancy in Jacot's receiving a reprimand from the *Garde Champêtre*," replied the Doctor, "little more came of it; but since then he has been on his best behaviour—still,

I would certainly advise young ladies and gentlemen fond of rambling among these mountains, as a rule, to be safe and snug under their own roofs before nightfall—for there are no doubt many more besides Jacot in these wild parts, who are '*plus malines que fous;*' so, now for *Blanc-pied,* Master Fred, and good night, and God bless you all."

Having mounted his Bucephalus, with every token from that noble beast that he had a gentleman, and no mistake, on his back—shouldered his umbrella, and made us promise, as we walked down with him to the gates, that we would all come soon and give Bachelor's hall a benefit, off trotted the little Doctor; nor did we turn back to the house till the last echo of *Blanc-pied's* feet had died away gradually in the distance.

END OF VOL. I.



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